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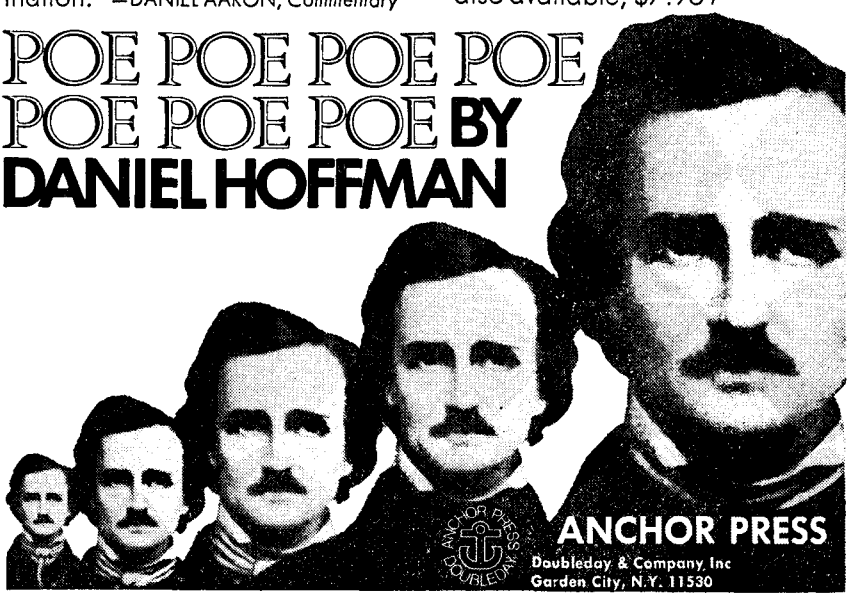

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VOLUME XXVI
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Marius Bewley, 1916-1973

Marius Bewley, a professor of English at Rutgers University and advisory editor of The Hudson Review, died suddenly at his home in St. George, Staten Island, New York, on January 24th. Bewley, who had his bachelor's and doctor's degrees from Cambridge University, was the author of *The Complex Fate* (Chatto and Windus, 1952), *The Eccentric Design* (Columbia University Press, 1959), *Masks and Mirrors* (Atheneum, 1970) and *The English Romantic Poets,* an anthology with commentaries (Modern Library, 1970). At the time of his death he was at work on a book on Benjamin Disraeli. The following remarks were delivered at a memorial service held in Kirkpatrick Chapel, Rutgers University, on February 9th.

* * *

When I think of Marius Bewley, I think of the Staten Island ferry. It's noon time—most likely a Sunday in Spring or Autumn —we have been invited over from Manhattan for lunch. We get on board at the Battery, there are the moments of anticipation, the boat pulls out; then there is the sense of release and excitement that comes from moving out onto open water, with the Manhattan skyline receding behind us—the smell of the water, the squawking of gulls—the sense of momentary suspension out of time, a transition between two worlds.

Then in a few minutes we dock, and in a few more have arrived at 22 Fort Place, that remarkable house which Marius Bewley and Garry Mac Kenzie have overhauled, repaired, and decorated so stunningly and idiosyncratically. In good weather there is perhaps a short tour of the garden, then we go upstairs to the living-room for drinks. We always see old friends here and almost always someone new: two or three of Marius' students, perhaps, or a visitor from England whom he knew in Cambridge days. After a drinking period that is sometimes rather prolonged, but always extremely pleasant, we go down to the dining-room, in which a splendid meal has been, somewhat magically, produced. . . . And over all this, Marius presides—affectionate, animated, exuding benevolence. When I think of him, I think of that word. For he was a *benevolent* man.

He was also, of course, a critic and scholar of the highest dis-

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tinction. His books, his essays on American literature and on the English Romantic writers, are a permanent contribution. He wrote with warmth and understanding—and with a scrupulous tact and honesty that kept him faithful to his subject. He did not, in the manner of lesser men, impose his ego on his material, or indulge in the contortions of contemporary chic.

Marius' work had been published in THE HUDSON REVIEW in the 1950's, and I had met him in the late fifties at about the time he began teaching at Fordham. We became friends. He and Garry began coming to my parties, and those memorable visits to Staten Island began. . . . In 1966, on my invitation, he joined the editorial board of the Review—I found his advice to be invaluable, and he himself often told me that he enjoyed the change of focus presented by this opportunity to read contemporary work. And so, when I think of Marius, I think of his scrupulous and detailed comments—sometimes committed to paper, sometimes conveyed to me by phone—on the many manuscripts which over the years we sent to him for a reading. In complex, rather Jamesian sentences, perceptions would be developed and crystallized, pros would be balanced against cons. Without ever compromising his standards, Marius always did his best to enter into the spirit and intention of the work he was reading. The connoisseur of Blake, Byron and Wordsworth was also a deeply perceptive appreciator and critic of William Stafford, of James Merrill, of A. R. Ammons—of many others.

Finally, I myself was a beneficiary of this perceptiveness and generosity. In late 1971, I was assembling my first collection of poems, and—after due warning—sent copies of the manuscript for criticism and advice to a few friends, among them Marius. It was Christmas time, he was busy, he was recovering from serious illness the preceding Summer. I had sent him over 120 poems, none of which he had seen before. A few weeks went by, my wife and I invited him and Garry in to have lunch with us on a Saturday; accepting, he told me he wanted to discuss my poems with me. . . . After the lunch, and I'm glad to say that it was at a place he particularly liked, the four of us came up to our apartment. He took me aside, said he would like to talk to me about the poems, but first—he had something for me to read. He handed me a sheaf of papers and left the room. I sat down, and read—page after page

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of comment on my poems, written out in his neat longhand: praise, criticism, comparisons, occasional thoughtful parentheses and asides. Above all, there was an understanding that was the result of his sympathetic grasp of the complex of experiences that went into the making of the poetry. I remember sitting stunned for several minutes when I realized what he had done, overcome by this spectacular generosity.

That was Marius Bewley, and when I think of him I shall always remember that afternoon.

One of the poems he particularly liked is a dream poem—and in our talk afterwards he asked me about it. "I don't know exactly why," he said, "but I like that poem enormously." I then told him that this was perhaps quite natural, because he and Garry were in fact *in* the poem, which is a description of a rather vivid dream I had in the late Summer of 1970. I should like to read it now, in his memory:

Somewhere there is a heaven that resembles
my idea of Cambridge sixty years ago:
long days of spring, tall elms, unhurried youths,
huge halls of soft stone aging in the sun.
Or not a heaven, but a resting place,
along a farther road some of us follow,
meant for instruction, where the quiet soul
learns for a time the wisdom of not doing.
In a great mess-hall underneath dim flags
I sat at table between you, my good friends—
you, priestly at the head, eating and smiling,
you at my right, extending gentle hands—
in dream. Yes, but it was our three real selves
at a meeting-place where they may always meet.

—FREDERICK MORGAN

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Notes on Contributors

DAVID RUBIN* is the author of three novels and several short stories with Indian settings, as well as articles on Indian literature. His most recent book is *The World of Premchand,* a translation of selected stories of Premchand, the twentieth-century Hindi novelist. The poems of Nirala are taken from a manuscript of the poet's work, "A Season on the Earth," edited and translated by Mr. Rubin, and submitted to the magazine under the auspices of the Asian Literature Program of the Asia Society. Mr. Rubin is an Instructor of Literature and Writing at Sarah Lawrence College.

NIRALA was born in 1899 and died in 1961. Nirala was his pen name, which appropriately means "the strange one." Even though he was the finest Hindi poet of his time, he was not quickly recognized. Mr. Rubin says, "His work was too startling in its originality, his language too difficult, his satire too bitter, his break with the past too offensive to the orthodox, and the depth of his feeling either too troubling or too far beyond the common ken to assure wide popularity."

HAYDEN CARRUTH's latest volume of poetry, *From Snow and Rock: From Chaos,* has just been published by New Directions.

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GEORGE STADE is a Professor of English and Chairman of the Columbia College English Department. He is the author of *Robert Graves* and coeditor with F. W. Dupee of *Selected Letters of E. E. Cummings.*

R. G. VLIET is a poet and fiction writer who is "currently completing a long novel that has seduced me into an improbable 450 pages." He writes that he is "stuck up here in the mountains of Vermont: a good place to work, but wood heat does not compare to Mexico." His story, "The Third Window," appeared in the Summer, 1972 issue of this Review; he has poems in the current number of *Kayak.*

VERNON YOUNG's collection of essays, *On Film,* was recently published by Quadrangle Books.

CHARLES W. MILLARD is Curator of Nineteenth-Century Painting at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. With this issue, Mr. Millard joins THE HUDSON REVIEW as Contributing Art Editor.

JOHN SIMON has been Theatre Critic for this Review since 1961.

RICHARD PEVEAR's essays on the Memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam, on Pound, and on Sinyavsky have appeared in recent issues.

In this twenty-fifth Anniversary Issue, MARVIN MUDRICK celebrates his own twentieth anniversary as a contributor with his fiftieth, as well as his tenth consecutive, appearance in the magazine.

With this issue, WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD joins THE HUDSON REVIEW as an Advisory Editor; a frequent contributor, he is the editor of the recently published *Penguin Critical Anthology of W. B. Yeats.*

ROGER SALE is Professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle. His books include *Reading Spenser* and *On Writing. Modern Heroism, Essays on D. H. Lawrence, William Empson, and J. R. R. Tolkien* has just been published by the University of California Press.

GUY DAVENPORT teaches English at the University of Kentucky.

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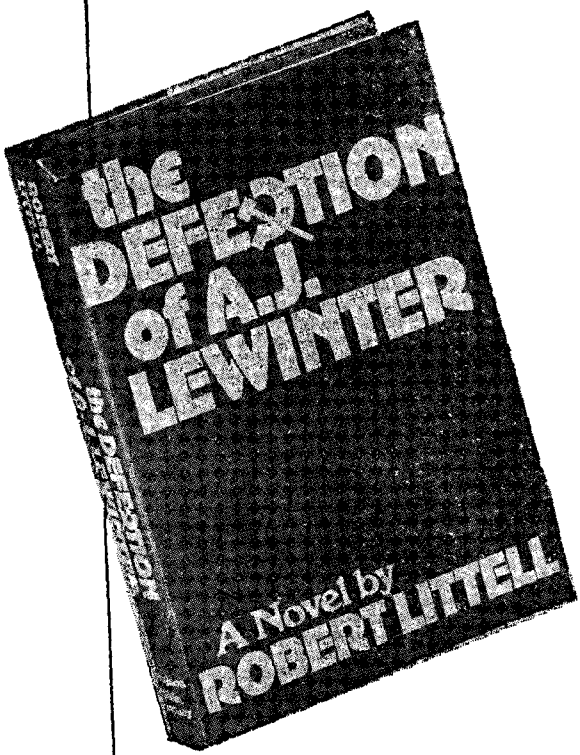

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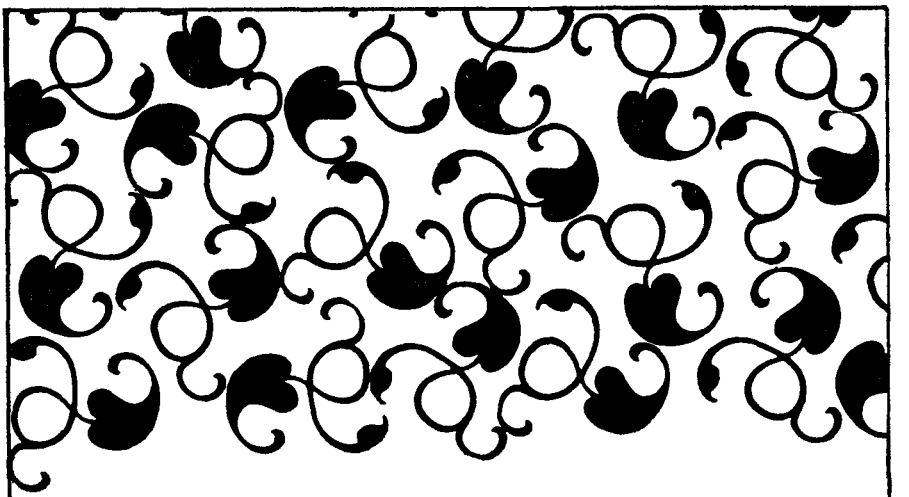

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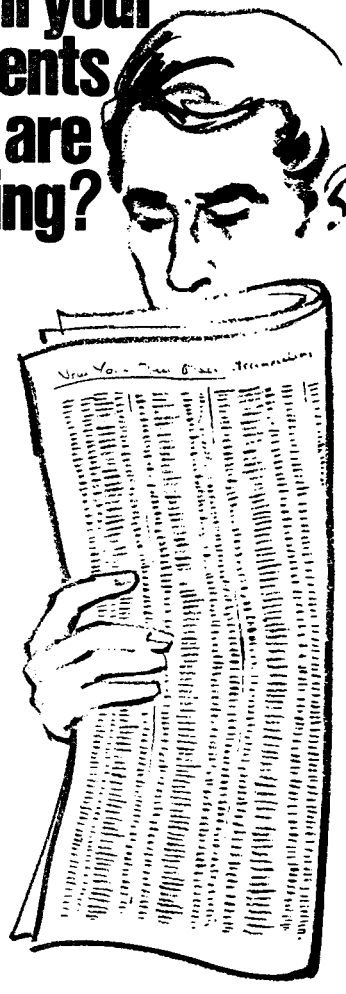

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NIRALA

Twenty-Eight Poems

Translated by DAVID RUBIN

AMONG TWENTIETH-CENTURY HINDI WRITERS only Premchand has so far received any recognition in the English-speaking world. But Premchand is, in fact, only one of several brilliant pioneers in what is essentially a vigorous and varied new literature, of which the other great figures—Nirala, Prasad, Pant and Jainendra, for example—are as yet scarcely known even by name outside of India.

To speak of Hindi literature—with a tradition going back several hundred years—as new may appear paradoxical. The problem is chiefly one of nomenclature, and it must be clarified before one can appreciate the magnitude of the revolutionary innovations of a genius as original as Nirala.

The "Hindi" language used by twentieth-century writers in North India is a comparatively new medium for literary expression. Until the end of the nineteenth century the language known as Hindi (originally an alternate name for Urdu) most often designated a variant phase, the Braj still spoken around Mathura, and sometimes eastern phases, like the Avadhi of Tulsi's seventeenth-century version of the Ramayana. These varieties of Hindi had a long tradition of great poetry by Sur, Tulsi and Bihari, a tradition given a quasi-religious prestige by its persistent Vaishnava themes and subject matter—the life history of Rama and the childhood and loves of Krishna. It was therefore essentially archaic, backward-looking and pastoral, and not particularly adaptable for the practical or temperamental needs of writers in such modern urban centers as Delhi or Lucknow.

The new Hindi, which was to become standard by the beginning of the present century, grew out of a phase of the language that had already provided the grammatical base for Urdu. By the middle of the nineteenth century writers were beginning to experiment with this kind of Hindi, known as *"khari boli,"* straight or plain speech. It was already the basis for the common vernacular of much of North India and syntactically more flexible than Braj but it lacked a refined literary vocabulary. Urdu had made up for this deficiency by borrowing extensively from Persian and Arabic. The proponents of *"khari boli"* Hindi began to follow a parallel path by introducing Sanskrit words to augment the vocabulary.

The success of this new literary language must of course be attributed ultimately to the genius of the writers who came to use it.

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In this respect, Hindi was graced, in the first half of the twentieth century, with a remarkable group of poets (a sort of Indian Pléiade known as the "Chhayavad" group) and novelists, of whom Nirala and Premchand respectively have emerged as the most outstanding.

There is surely a remarkable good fortune in being among the first writers to create in what might be called an almost virgin language, and this circumstance accorded with and nourished the experimental and revolutionary tendencies of the new poets, who had been freed through a kind of linguistic grace from the by now worn-out material and dimmed vision of the Braj tradition. "Chhayavad," from *chhaya,* shadow, reflection or image, turned to earlier Indian sources, such as classical epic and drama and Brahmanical writings, as well as to Tagore and English romanticism. In terms of form, the Chhayavad poets, trying their hand at short lyrics, historical narrative, elegy and satire, generally abandoned established Indian patterns and experimented with stanzas and meters according to the needs and promptings of their own imaginations. As a result of this freedom of approach, much of their poetry is, at least on the surface, far more accessible to Westerners than the abstract and formally conceived *ghazal* or *rubai* of the Urdu poets.

Suraj Kumar Tevari, later known as Suryakant Tripathi and finally by his pen-name "Nirala"—("strange," "lonely," "alien") was born into a family of Brahmans from the United Provinces long settled in Mahishadal, a small princely state in Bengal. The date of his birth is in dispute but it was probably February 1899. By the geographical accident of his birth he was an outsider from the beginning of his life and, perhaps more important, familiar with Bengali as a second mother tongue and thus open to the influence of Tagore and Bengali literature in general. His command of English, on the other hand, to judge by his correspondence in that language, was never very secure, although he read and admired Shakespeare and the Romantic poets. Nirala seems to have taken his education very lightly and in 1914, with a wife and expecting the first of his two children, the future poet failed his matriculation examinations, for which his father banished him from Mahishadal. This catastrophe sent the young couple to the bride's home at Dalmau, in Nirala's ancestral region of Kanauj in the United Provinces. In 1917 his father died and in 1918 he lost his wife, brother and sister-in-law in the influenza epidemic. He was left with his son and daughter and his brother's four children as well to support, and for the rest of his life he was never able to extricate himself from grave financial difficulties, which were further complicated by his own impulsive and ultimately legendary generosity.

After a short term in the service of the Maharaja of his native Mahishadal, Nirala went to Calcutta and began his literary career as an editor of a series of journals. There is disagreement among critics as to just when he began to write poetry, though it seems to

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have been even before his wife's death. The earliest publication of his verse was in 1923, in one of the Hindi journals he was editing. That same year he brought out the first collection of his poems, including such symbolist experiments as "The *Juhi* Bud" and longer works based on the Ramayana and Vivekananda's interpretation of the Upanishads.

For the next thirty-eight years, until his death in 1961, Nirala edited, translated, and wrote prodigiously. Among his published works there are novels, collections of short stories and essays, and a dozen volumes of poetry. In his poems the range of subject matter and technique is enormous. There are recreations of ancient epic material, impressionistic and naturalistic genre descriptions of peasant life and slum tenements, satire and patriotic song, metaphysical nature poetry and mystical devotional hymns that revive (though they do not imitate) the *bhakti* inspirations of Tulsi and Kabir. Traditional stanza forms and meters are used, along with rhymed and unrhymed free verse, and even doggerel.

The development of Nirala in both technique and sensibility reveals a progress from a sensuously romantic early phase through strenuous experimentation with the rhythms and idioms of living speech to a sinewy and chastened diction of apparent simplicity and, often, baffling complexity. Like Yeats in this, he also recalls the Irish poet in his disenchantment with the quality of life in his newly independent country.

Nirala's volumes of poetry present a spiritual autobiography as well as a record of technical development. In them one sees the evolution from the exuberant pantheism and nationalism of the early years through the bitter discouragements and disillusionments of the thirties to the final poignant but serene voice of the last poems. The pivotal event in his maturing as a poet seems to have been the death of his daughter, Saroj, in 1935 at the age of 19, a crisis in his life described in his long elegy for her.

Throughout Nirala's career certain characteristics of thought and attitude persist—passionate sympathy for the insulted and injured, corrosive scorn for the hypocrisy and indifference of the privileged classes, profound distrust of public leaders, and an indestructible joy in the transient world of nature. With his fierce independence and constitutional rebelliousness he could never swim with the current, accept any dogma or solemn piety, or curb his satirical instinct, which did not spare even Gandhi and Nehru at a time when it was close to treasonable to criticize them. Opposed as he was to all orthodoxies, religious, political and literary, he paid the perhaps inevitable price of being neglected by the establishment as eccentric, savage, and even mad. Though he had devoted admirers throughout his career, he was passed over when it came to national awards and, even at this moment, not only is there no single edition of his collected works but some

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of his most important books are out of print. The difficulties of his vocabulary, the often thorny compression of syntax, and the originality and occasional obscurity of his imagery have not made for great popularity, although in the last three or four years important studies of his work have been made by Hindi critics.

In English at the present time Nirala is represented by translations of about twenty-five poems (some of them, especially those with social significance, translated several times) scattered through various Indian journals and anthologies. In America he is known almost exclusively through the six poems included in an anthology of modern Hindi poetry. The six are "transcreations" rather than translations; whatever their merits as English poems, they seriously misrepresent the style, tone and even the content of the originals, and render Nirala indistinguishable from the other poets in the anthology. The transcreations add whole volleys of adjectives and images that are not in the original, along with changing the stanza pattern, shifting subordination and qualifying one term with a clause meant for another. (One transcreation, for example, suggests ". . . in the spot of shade/ Cast by an old blind bird who sits there/ Dumbly recalling the music it once could make," where the Hindi says, "Only one old bird/ Sits there, remembering a little.") In the selections offered here the translator has attempted to adhere as literally as possible to the original Hindi, since in any case it is impossible to recreate the musical richness, the specific savor and the complex allusive and connotative power of Nirala's language.

—DAVID RUBIN

THE *JUHI* BUD

On a vine in the deserted wood
she slept, blissful in dreams of love,
pure tender slender girl—
the *juhi* bud—
eyes closed, chilly in the folded leaf.
A spring night. Her lover,
tormented by separation in a distant land,
was that wind they call
the southern sandal-mountain breeze.
He recalled their sweet reunions,
the midnight drenched in moonlight,

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the lovely trembling body of the girl.
And then? That wind
crossed over grove lake river mountain wood
and vine-entangled jungles
to reach where he could dally
with the budding flower.
She slept—
for, tell me, how could she suspect
that her lover was at her side?
The hero kissed her cheek,
and she swayed, shivering from it,
but even now she did not waken
nor ask forgiveness for her fault.
The long curved sleepy eyes stayed shut
as though she swooned, intoxicated
from the wine of youthful longings—
who can say? Ruthless, her lover,
of a sudden cruel,
struck that tender body hard,
slapped her pale full cheeks.
The girl started up,
stared all about her, astonished,
and found her darling by her bed.
She smiled, gratified in her desire,
and blossomed in her lover's arms.

[*1916?*]

RIVER CROSSING

The boat drifts, the current's fierce—
steer well, boatman of my life!
Skimming, turning
in the churning waves
the boat is swamped,
faltering, halting
on the waters.

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Shaking, quaking
it comes about,
the rudder broken—
boatman of my life!
I'm gripped by fear,
struck with trembling
through and through.
Second by second
the flood is rising.
Infinitely far
the other shore,
boatman of my life!

[1920]

HOPELESS

Life:
  a wailing and a bawling
    without end.
My own heart's tough as steel—
  you can pound it for all it's worth.

Let
  the dawn light never rise
  on the blind night
    of my sorrow;
  there won't be light enough
    nor praise, nor welcome.

Let
  my prayers be
    unanswered;
  every petal of the heart's lotus
    blighted;
  life
    shot.

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Let
my soul
created in emptiness
take to itself the emptiness
of creation.

Let
my world
go down.
Even then
in that vast darkness
my ramshackle wagon
will go lurching on.

[1927]

SONG

Shedding its last rays the sun
goes down to its other world.
With weary steps folk come home,
each man to his own door.
Down the skyways slow descending
the darkening evening
sets the tender burden
of her feet upon the earth.
Quietly the breeze pours out.
The flower of the woodvine opens,
its petals shaping to folded palms
offering reverence.
The beloved rises, arrayed in beauty,
her eyes inclined downward,
and begins the ceremony of the lamps
lighting up the house.

[1934]

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BREAKING STONES

A woman breaking stones—
on a road in Allahabad I saw her
breaking stones.

No shade
from the tree under which she sat.
Her body black, her young breasts
bound tight in the *choli;*
eyes lowered,
mind turned to her lover
and acts of love.
The heavy hammer in her hand
struck time and time again.
Across the road long rows of trees
and high-walled mansions.
It was the hottest season,
the sun glaring,
and the scorching wind rose,
burning the earth like cotton,
with the air full of dust and sparks.
  It was noon by now,
  and she still breaking stones.
While I watched she saw me,
looked at me once,
then at the house, then at her ragged clothes.
Seeing no one else was there
she stared at me with the eyes
of one who doesn't cry
even when they beat her.
As from a tuned sitar
I heard a strain of music then
I'd never heard before.
After a moment she shuddered,
beautiful,
while the sweat trickled down her forehead,
then once more gave herself to her work
as though to say,
"I'm a woman
breaking stones." [*1935*]

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REMEMBERING SAROJ[1]

Scarcely nineteen you took one step and crossed
the whole of life, my daughter, closed your young
eyes to your father, and said farewell to living.
My song, you shed this individual self
and entered forever freedom beyond the changing.
You had lived out your eighteen years fulfilled
and pure when your swift feet mounted the ship
of death, as though to say, "Father, I choose
the full light. This isn't dying but only
the lotus-brightening, a crossing over."

Being a poet I had some understanding
so I might catch the speech of silent lips.
I'd made my offerings day and night to luminous
Sarasvati. Living poem of mine,
when you abandoned me on earth, pierced
by every arrow, did you go to heaven
thinking, When my father makes the journey
he'll find the going hard, and then I'll help
him through the darkness? So spoke your easy going,
it had no other meaning when you left us
under the bleak sky of the first day
of the bright half of the rainy month.

Daughter, I was a worthless father, did
nothing for you. Although I knew some ways
of earning, I would always let them slip
away, knowing as I well knew the wrongs
attending the path to wealth. I always lost
the struggle for success. And so, my dear,
I couldn't dress you in silk or even give you
enough to eat. But I could never snatch
the poor man's bread or bear to see him weep.
I always saw reflected in my tears
only my own face and my own heart.

1 Written after the death of the poet's daughter, Saroj. The name means lotus; throughout the poem the many synonyms for lotus and the flower's many conventional epithets in Sanskrit and Hindi are called upon to reinforce and lend a poignant resonance to this evocation of Saroj's life and her significance for Nirala.

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Humbly I'd think, time and time again:
my work is a gift of love to Hindi—not
defeat but a victory garland, an offering
superhuman. There were other ways
but I proved myself only with my skill
and sacrifice to literary art,
leaving for others mere acquisition,
and devoted all my powers to prose and verse.

Others who watched were quick to laugh, but watch
the battle was all they did. The swift arrows
rained on me, wounding me times innumerable.
Throughout the grueling fight I did not flinch
beneath those arrows, but caught in art the music
of struggle, fruit of the cruel battlefield.
The beauty of it will bear still more fruit,
awakening a sun in every life.
Just look—taking her artist's brush
what colors would Sarasvati pour out,
what charm desired by me reflect, and with
her love what real fulfillment grant my art?

And so, unskilled at earning, I denied
you what was due. When once you stayed some days
with me, bowing your head with dignity,
my daughter, even in your father's house,
before leaving that sorry yard your eyes
let go the tears of your suppressed desires,
and you sighed such a little sigh for all
the longings buried in your heart.
I understood, and I looked on, wondering
what I could do to help, and I did nothing.

At fifteen months we saw how quick you were
in understanding; your mother kissed and kissed you,
as with your life you gave new life to her.
Her story ended, and she left us. Then I
gave you into her mother's keeping. There
existence was all pleasure, night and day.

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Though sometimes put out by your brother's teasing
you wept, tears glistening in your lotus eyes,
and understanding he would coax you, take
you walking down along the Ganges banks.
Your tear-washed face shining with laughter
you'd watch the vast reaches of bright waves.

In those days too I was engrossed—in vain—
in being a poet, writing ceaselessly
verse known as "free"; but the flock of editors,
no wise impressed, skimmed through it all and sent it back
with a line or two in answer. Then I'd go
to sit for a long while out in the yard,
staring at the sky, and pondering the virtues
of editors. And following my custom,
I'd pinch the grass around me, toss it away
at random, working out my feelings on it.

One morning, I remember, for the first time
the sunlight fell full on you, showed your beauty—
you playing like a restless spirit. I'd come,
after two years away, to Sasu's house[2]
eager to see you with my own eyes.
I sat outside on a cane stool by the gate,
holding in my hand my horoscope
with the long long tale of my life. I read
in it of two auspicious marriages,
and I laughed, in my heart a great desire
to wipe out this scribbling about my fate;
I looked to the future unafraid.

Before this too my own people had said
affectionately, "Life would be happy
if you could find some educated and
attractive girl." Many offers were broached.
Politely I rejected them. To all who came,
entreaty in their eyes, intent on my
acceptance, I would say, unhesitating,

[2] Sasu—mother-in-law (Saroj's maternal grandmother); throughout the poem Nirala refers to her as Sasu or Sasuji.

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"I'm *mangali*"[3]—hearing which they turned away.
Once there were complications, a proposal
in no way easy to reject; I felt
the full charm of those eyes, and Sasu told me,
"My dear, they're fine important people; the girl
has her degree. They said, 'He's twenty-six,
high time he was a bridegroom, and the girl
is just eighteen.' And they folded their hands and pleaded:
'He's a true gentleman, a poet, a regular sage,
and he has a good name, and our own girl
is educated, beautiful. It's fitting
for you to tell him all these things. He'd be
a happy husband.' They'll be back tomorrow."
My look turned cold; before my eyes appeared
your image, blithe, laughing. I was myself
again, considered this marriage sensibly.
I picked up the horoscope and showed it to you.
"Here, take it," I said, giving it to you. "Play."
Then Sasu came back, fresh from her bath, hair down,
in her best clothes, smiling mysteriously
and talking of the inevitable subject:
what to expect tomorrow. Amused, I pointed
to those tattered remnants of the horoscope;
dismayed, she watched you sitting amidst the scraps.

As time went by you stepped beyond the realm
of childish games; the beauty of your age
rounded to fullness, an element of grace
settled on your sweetness, trembling, vibrant,
like Malkauns lightly sounded on a new vina.[4]
Awakening gradually from night-dreaming like a dawn
that rises on the rhythm of the morning hymn, and
trembling
with the burden of your own light—so trembled the forest,
the morning skies; with each experiencing
of yours all bloomed,
sky earth tree bud and blossom.

[3] Under the influence of Mangal (Mercury), thought to be unlucky. A *"mangali"* in any case should marry only another *"mangali."*

[4] A midnight *rag*. In the tradition of Indian music a new instrument is preferred to an old one.

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That look of yours! streams inexhaustible
and bountiful rose gushing like waters
in a blue tumult, but—checked by the holy bonds
that limit the body—from your eyes
came only tears in gentle moderation.
And in your voice your mother's nuanced sweetness,
beloved music, sounded exuberantly[5]
the very notes of my elation. My darling,
a singer natural born, you were the music
for my verse made visible in loveliness—
I'd not dared hope for such a blessing during
this incarnation. Such music was never heard
before from one unschooled. But then, I knew
that when the cuckoo's child first nourished in
an alien nest has learned to fly, her voice will sound
in some new forest, silent up till now.
To me you were all beauty manifest
as in your own heart woke the cherished poet,
there started up an unfamiliar wind
that moved to resonance all stored up feelings
for tree bud blossom everything together
as it caressed your hair and fragile limbs.
You watched it all, your eyes unwavering,
and then I understood your life.

Looking at you one day Sasu said,
"It was our duty to bring her up, but now
it's time to give Saroj into the hands
of a good husband with an honorable name—this is
our holy obligation. Take her now
to your own house for a while and seek a groom
worthy of both of you. We'll gladly help
arrange her wedding."
Silently I listened,
reflected, said nothing, neither "no" nor "oh,"
and took you with me, my golden girl, like a beggar
hastening a costly treasure, bright as dawn,
into the darkness of his house. Cast down,

[5] A pun, "bahar" meaning spring, and by extension exuberance, and also a springtime *rag*.

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I thought, over and over again,
"These Kanyakubja Brahmans[6]—they burn down
their own houses, they bite the hand that feeds them.
Marrying Saroj to one of them could be
a source of grief, since poisoned fruit alone
grows on the poisoned tree. They'll prove a desert,
and marriage a mirage." But then I thought,
"It's right that I should travel the path traveled
by my forefathers—why should I not fulfill
the accepted ritual?" But I'd never feared to go
against established custom, and how could I
stomach the folly of all those absurd traditions?
I was not humble enough to violate,
for them, my natural feeling. "Those Brahmans:
dirty and dry as Jamna sandbanks; glum
faces of eaters of borrowed food; like feet
blistered in painful leather shoes, oiled
and squeaking and foul-smelling—I'm not
so blind I can do homage to such feet,
or reverence people so devoid of worth.
To wed my Parvati to such a Shiva
is not at all what I desire." Then I
recalled, a while ago I'd met a boy
involved in literature, a Kanyakubja—
perhaps a sign of luck beyond the grasping.
He promised well, seemed worthy of our welcome,
and I made my resolve, my heart opening
with new affection. I wrote to him to come
at once, and the boy himself was overjoyed.
I told him, "I'm empty-handed now. I could
pledge my inheritance to the moneylenders
to make a match with some rich fellow—but such
is not my wish, nor am I such a fool
as to attempt to give a dowry. Why
at such a joyous time crave ostentation?
If you agree I'll break the custom,[7] dispense

[6] Nirala's community, Brahmans from Kanauj, whom Nirala often attacks for their orthodoxy and arrogance.

[7] Normally a marriage would depend on the astrologers' interpretations of the horoscopes of bride and groom. Conflicting charts would oblige the parents of both parties to seek new matches.

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with the usual astrological reckoning.
And if the priests refuse, then I'll perform
the ceremony myself. And understand,
all that I have belongs to her, my chaste,
my well-born girl."
The priest did come, and friends,
my fellow writers with their kin, and saw
a wedding of a new kind. On you the splendor
was poured out with the pitcher's holy water.
You looked at me, and on your lips a smile
like lightning, yourself the image of your joy,
the music of your lover's silent love.
Your beauty opened on a sigh, your faith in him
possessed you; from your cast-down eyes the light
fell trembling on your lips. In you I saw
the courage, the first singing of my own spring,
that love without embodied form, the feeling
I'd poured out in my poems and once had sung
with my lost darling, filling my senses now
with passionate joy. Just such was Rati[8] taking
a human form, like heaven metamorphosed
into substantial earth.

The wedding ended. Of my own relations
not one was there, nor had they been invited.
No wedding music filled the house to keep
us all awake both day and night. But a silence
full of new life and love spread music everywhere.
I gave you then a mother's last instructions,
myself arranged for you the marriage bed,
and thought: she is Shakuntala! But here's
a different lesson and a different art.

You'd stayed a while with us at home; and then
secure and happy in your grandmother's lap,
loved by your aunt and uncle as the cloud
that gives the water loves the earth, sheltering
through your joy and sorrow, devoting all
to you. They were the vine on which you budded,

[8] Goddess of desire and spouse of Kāma, the Indian Eros.

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and bloomed, nourished with love. And at the end
again you found a refuge in their house,
there two years later closed your eyes.

Of me so long unlucky you
were the one blessing. Now life remains
one tale of woe: how can I tell it now
when I could not before? Let the lightning fall
on all my work, and if it be my fate,
I'll go on down this road, head bent, but perish
my works like lotuses blasted by winter.
To you, daughter, I sacrifice the karma
of all past lives as offering to your spirit.[9]

[1935]

WILD JASMINE

The year begins:
flowering breasts of the earth—
the hills high in their beauty;
behind the new leaves
bees and koels,
their lives all vibrant sound,
create a music of desire
that rouses joy, fires up
the fiercest youthful craving.
The dazzling, potent sun
over and over again kisses the kissed earth
with a wild assault of rays beyond the counting,
savage, greedy, tender, lustful,
with the equitable eyes of love,
giving all gifts and taking in return

[9] The poet, renouncing his work in this life as a failure, offers Saroj, in the traditional sacrifice to the spirit of the dead relation, whatever merit he may have acquired in previous lives, i.e., the most precious spiritual possession a person may have. Such a sacrifice is traditionally Buddhist or Jain rather than Hindu and suggests the sacrifice made by the Bodhisattva.

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the beloved's freely given pride.
The heat burns,
more and more terrible,
the earth sweating and trembling
as though her lover pressed against her breasts,
her eyes shut in ecstasy,
her moan the scorching wind;
and in that wind all creatures, all matter
alike insensate.

Tonight the sky
takes on a look of doom,
sulphurous as overwhelming fire,
smokeless, cloudless, swamping everything,
turning the whole world, except for oneself, to ash.
Dust rises, the land beneath it disappears.
Slowly, frustrated, sadly taking in the scene,
I walked down toward the river, and I thought:
"My life's a total waste,
I've lost the battle.
I never dreamed that everyone
would trample on my plans for the future—"
and much more of the sort.
Reaching my favorite spot,
I sat alone there, watching,
full of an aching music.
Then I began to think more along that line:
"If I had been
some prince's son I'd not suffer this disgrace.
How many scholars would be my hangers-on,
hands stretched out, head bent for my largesse,
I'd give a little, take much more.
And all the papers would chant my fame in unison.
My life story would provide the feature articles—
lavishly illustrated!
Not only that. As the heir of a millionaire
I'd be educated far beyond the Arabian Sea.
My father: great expert on the morals of the nation,
with a firm grip on his money and—not batting an
eyelash—

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a fervent Communist as well, preaching the Revolution;
and the people, thinking it through carefully,
would elect him President.
Ten national songs (for a fee) would honor him,
and they'd sell them, singing them in tones
harsher than a jackass's.
And not to be left behind, the Hindi societies
would pronounce them (lest they perish) immortal
literature.
I'd get the news at once by overseas cable.
I'd give banquets for the lordlings,
go on sprees with them—thus spending
a mere six thousand a month,
and, my education completed, return to my worthy old
man.
I'd step down delicately from the plane,
producing a great effect in the press—
they'd all come running, camera in hand,
swiftly make their requests,
which politely I'd accord them.
I'd pose in different ways,
in aspects of twenty moods, looking up or down.
Then I'd give the country my message,
stern and moving, in which
only the language would be the country's.
I'd pour out all the new Russian ideas
which only the cleverest would grasp
when they'd read them over and over again.
Then with my father I would swear
a solemn oath to serve the people,
and generously, standing on a stage,
I'd propagandize the Bolshevik line."

With heat the summit of the evening sky
had turned red, reddening the whole horizon.
Troubled, I opened my eyes, looked eagerly,
for it seemed as though a balmy fragrance drifted from
the beloved's hair. At once I thought:
I came here alone and I've sat here alone.
Then turning I saw all around me the smiling jasmine,

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its own life filled with that heat,
taking heat and tribulation on its head,
breathing up an infinite sigh from the depths,
like a sage's devotion piercing through
the woven-up suffering of worldly life,
rising serenely,
or as a lovely apsara
crosses over the sea of foaming milk,
limbs and hair wet from myriad waves,
and trembling under the astonished world's arrow eyes.
I said, "Jasmine, people do not suspect
that you bloom here, spilling out your music.
When the fierce heat strikes
you create a wine in your little chalice,
filling it with the coolness of the underworld."
Head bowed respectfully, I drew closer.
Suddenly the evening breeze rose, carrying
the vine's fragrance—bending, tensing, laughing gusts.
Then turning her face with its known-forever look
and every moment pouring forth the pure scent of her body,
the jasmine said:
"I give everything.
Don't touch me. You forget your place,
the impurity of your touch. Look from afar."
I stopped there on the path
which shone bright in the glow
of a balmy new light,
and I praised the vine:
Radiant tender forest girl,
what poetry can claim such milk-white petals,
where else such constant love
or such a garland on the breast of worldly lovers?
What heroine has this easy rhythmic grace
or such bewitching fragrance in her kissed tresses?

"Only yourself you've wasted, only played
in this life," said the jasmine,
its body shivering.
"Ku-u ku-u," the koel sang in final bliss,

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"Drink where drink where?" the loving papiha's voice,[10]
that spreads sweet poisoned feelings in the breast.
The wind rose, stirring every greening leaf,
the river flowed, its waves a-tremble
and full of longing, and the stars unparalleled
wandering in the sky-darkness spied out
the jasmine's loveliness—their light the light
of thousands of astonished eyes.
Overwhelmed, I watched; the wild jasmine laughed,
spoke with indiscernible sound:
"The carnival of this world glitters
only with the shallow beauty of things
that turns the treasure of the soul to stone.
What wouldn't bring a penny in this wilderness,
go try to find its equal
in the rich towns of the world.
All's ego there,
so some are great and the rest little, unknown.
But where there's wisdom,
look—all are small, the unequal equal,
all a company of friends,
their eyes' light making anywhere a heaven."
I said,
"This is true, oh beautiful!
On your stem
when under the wild beating of the hail
you dance.
Remain in my heart
the only poem,
and purify it with your grace."

I lingered there till morning.
Then some Brahman broke
the bent branch of the vine.
"I go," the wild jasmine said,
"offering my life at the feet of the Beloved."
Silent, the morning wind
watched and passed on. [1937]

[10] The papiha's song is heard by Nirala as *"Pi kahan?"* (drink where). It is associated with love's longing and the separation of lovers in the rains. The koel, the Indian cuckoo, is often identified with spring and the awakening of new love.

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A STUMP

Today a stump,
its power gone,
all foliage gone.

Now it doesn't quicken with the spring
nor sprouting green bend like an archer's bow
nor shoot out the love god's blossomed arrows;
no travelers sit sighing in its shade,
nor any pair of lovers shedding tears.

Only one old bird
sits there, remembering a little.

[*1937*]

A LOOK AT DEATH

What I've not said, say it,
ever youthful goddess,
create and still create your songs.
In a world too vast
you locked me in
and humbled me with grief.
And what you say is:
"Through sorrow's workings
I've granted you new riches.
Transform those bird's wings now,
in the water be a fish;
the free sky's gone, so let
existence in the sea
suffice."
Clear, everything you said to me,
and still I didn't understand,
and that caused all my sorrow.
That loving kiss you gave to me
today's a cup, brimming with poison.

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And laughing you tell me, "Drink, my lover,
my desperate lover, drink. I'm freedom!
In death I come.
Fear not." [*1938*]

CLEAR SKIES

After many days, clear skies,
the sun ablaze, the world content.

Horizons open, trees shine forth.
Sheep and buffalo are set to graze.
Children squabble and play and tease,
and daughters make their houses bright.

From village to village people wander,
some to market, some to sit
and chat beneath the banyan trees,
while sturdy lads strip down to wrestle.

Girls crowd together at the well,
today not caring if water splashes
on their skirts. How the gossip flies
as they stand there and shoot
the well-aimed arrows of their eyes. [*1938*]

*

Have mercy Lord
on all
down-trampled people,
to all
poor wretches grant
protection.

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Mind and body fill
with clean love,
faces make
mild and kind,
on honest eyes
pour down
the dawning ray.

Let no head
before the mighty
bow.
The fitful heart
make constant,
and carry it
on the endless current
of its devotion
beyond
this life.[11] [1939]

I'M ALONE

I'm alone.
I see
the evening of my day draw near.

My hair is white and sparse,
my cheeks sunken,
my walk ever slower:
the festival is over.

I know I've crossed
the rivers and torrents I had to cross.
I laugh now as I see
there wasn't any boat. [1940]

[11] In the original the only pronominal expression is "your." Indian commentators paraphrase the second and third stanzas using "my" and "me," but Nirala's deliberate avoidance of such words makes plain his wish that the prayer be construed as universal, not personal.

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*

Don't see yourself as alien,
don't call the alien your own.
Don't think dreams are imagination,
don't call imagination dreams.

For the honor of the eye
live with the eye of honor.
For austere meditation sit indeed,
but don't call sitting meditation.

Hold together like the bubble,
let go like the rose.
The eye beautiful from falling asleep
don't call a closing of the eye. [1942]

LOVE SONG

I'm a Brahman's son
and I love her.

She belongs to the Kahars[12]
and at the first crack of light
she brings the water-jugs to my house,
and I die for her.

She's black as a cuckoo, oh,
her walk straight and steady,
and not yet married. My heart
bursts with longing for her.

She comes every day and wakes us all
but I'm the only one who understands her game.
She takes away the big water jug
and I bide my time. [1946]

[12] A very low-caste community whose members traditionally do such menial tasks as drawing water from the wells.

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*

Don't tie the boat up here, friend!
The whole village would wonder, friend!

This is the very landing where
laughing she'd step into the stream to bathe.
Her glance caught, she'd stare back,
and her legs would tremble, friend.

Her laugh said almost everything,
yet she kept her feelings to herself.
Heard everyone and bore with everyone,
but gave them all the slip, friend!

[1950]

*

Dense darkness shrouds the earth,
the ship dips wildly in the storm.

The pilgrim is a captive in the temple,
the elephants rant in the wood,
the child without a reason cries,
for the provider no one provides.

The waters moil and whirl,
then falling back they lap and cringe;
mountains rise, then split the earth;
the night is a fatal spell.

Alive though stale and withered,
though empty, clinging to existence,
drinking up the purity of the heart:
such is this unprofitable journey.

[1950]

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*

Make all things natural:
fill me like a pitcher
with the essence.

You cheated every heart,
pillaged all treasure;
in such a pass, a curse
on youth, on life.
Your grace grant else
I'll not suffice.

The world's net's spread,
part and parcel illusion,
no road can be traced
in the spreading darkness;
black error pierce now
with your arrow.[13]

[*1950*]

*

Whoever's spent
these days of sorrow
counting and counting
the minutes, the trifles,
has strung a necklace
of tears like pearls
and tossed it around
his lover's throat
to see the lovely face
serene and bright
in the night of sorrow.

[*1950*]

[13] An image from Vedic literature: the arrow pierces the darkness to bring light, the cloud to bring rain, etc.

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*

The cuckoo speaks in every grove,
his notes shot through with rapture.

The dense new-leaving woods have trembled,
like ears the caves resound with joy;
the natural covering of the world drawn taut,
veins and sinews test their power to feel.

In house and forest we lived with age and death,
drinking up the juice of countless lives.
Drops of honeyed pollen have scattered,
fragrant is the body of the twig.

Garnering in its rays the subtle stars
the bright live sun comes round its ordered course.
Filled with drunken music sweetly humming
the bud sways with the bee.

[1950]

*

At the touch of my lover's hand I woke.
So I had fallen asleep, unlucky girl.

The flowers of the weeping tree[14] have fallen,
the doorway's filled with golden beams,
the birds' sweet babble by now has died down.
Marked with ashes the ascetic has set out.

The children are deep in their studies,
the master of the house is at his morning worship,
the mistress makes all ready for the bath,
and at the door the beggar's cry is heard. [1950]

14 *Nyctanthes arbor tristis,* shephalika or har-singhar ("love-stealing"), which blooms only at night and sheds its petals at dawn. The dye from the blossoms is used for Buddhist robes.

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*

Every thread was worn out
when I saw a brand new
dawn sewn tight again,
sweet music shook my heart,
I heard spring's drowsy buzzing—
but then oh my body
was already cold.

The path-way of the eyes
opened,
the bud's sweet fragrance
mingled,
what was held inside
was swindled,
from the body scent and color
faded.

Now the talking's stopped,
the heat's been cooled,
sin washed and straightened out,
and the ray
fallen on the noisy mouth.

[1950]

*

Guide the ship
to the other shore.

Hands tired with rowing,
no one along with me,
my forehead sweating, and oh
in the middle of the stream!

When I crossed the woods
my face wilted and drooped.

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Come, make an ending
of my calamity.

The whirlpool has the boat;
forgotten all evasions
in the ceaseless roaring of
the river current.

[1950]

*

A little boat,
a golden evening,
rays spread like lashes.
A girl fair as Parvati
plays the vina;
towards the east the boat
goes drifting; a Rajput
gives the rhythm
with a steady clapping of his hands.
The lad's a singer too,
and there are folk aplenty
sitting around to listen;
and both of them serene
while the boat goes drifting,
gently rocking,
easing the heart.

[1952]

*

Plowing done the team comes home,
yoke set over the bullocks' shoulders,
on the bar the upturned plow,
reins in hand the aging father,
and the mother, bundle steady on her head;

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father goes to the village corral,
mother home, and the boys come running.

There are mangoes and roseapples,
some figs and unripe *gullu*,[15]
the boys go wild picking them out—
there are real ones on every tree.
Then the oldest son's wife
sets out the little sweet cakes
and gets Manni to cook them. [1952]

*

Fresh clouds cover the black sky,
spread over forests, mountains, gardens, faces,
touching the mango-heavy orchards,
pouring over the rice fields.
A girl comes out, the pitcher in her hand,
embracing the east wind like a lover;
the water churns in the lotus pond,
the ditches overflow,
the drunken river rushes on;
and the joy of swinging
from a neem tree on the bank. [1954]

*

Shining autumn fills the skies,
the lillies dance in every pond.
At dawn shephali blossoms fall,
poor bodies shamed by the sunbeams.
Brooks and rivers dwindle now.
In every house they change to warmer clothes.

[15] The berry-like fruit of the mahua (*bassia latifolia*).

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The nights are turning quieter,
the sun's husbandry more fruitful.
In the villages the paddy reapers
gather before their houses to talk and laugh.
The wagtails reappear, the ibis
and the cranes are back, covering the trees.
And the beauty ripples like a wave
in the eyes of the girl with the lovely lashes.

[1955]

*

The buds have come back to the jasmine,
the branches smile with bees.
What lived without a drop of water
suddenly grown rich sucks nectar.
Pleasures course through every vein,
waves spill gurgling out of the canals.
Songs of the rains and all twelve months
fly up and brighten the eastern wind.
Men's fortunes are reversed,
and every leaf begins to breathe.
Drawn by the mangoes' fragrance
wandering folk come back home.
Wreaths of flowers hang from every door
and rivers overflow their banks.

[1958]

LAST POEM

The poison of a life
infected with literature
has been exhausted.
In my inmost heart the lamp

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of the divine command is lit.
One ray shows the road
through the dark, like
the pole star amid the constellations.
The ending of the play—a flowering
whether it bore fruit
or withered barren,
a holy sage's on a bed of leaves
or just some ordinary man's.
Bhishma
on the cruel bed of arrows
turns his gaze upwards.
The fiery heat has cooled,
the rains ended too;
at dawn filaments of dew
cover the autumn lotus.
The cold broken, spring mangoes
put out their scented blossoms.
My armies that reached the four horizons
are done with:
restrained and measured verse,
melody, style, essential feeling;
and from my hand
the sweetly rhythmed instruments
have dropped.
My work—a failure,
the struggles of all my warriors
petered out,
their target missed.
My hide,
once tensed for a shield,
has gone slack.
Another dawning,
another turning
and returning
of the heart.

[1961]

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

Five Poetical Abstracts

METAPHYSICAL

fascination
o' jack-o'-lanterns

round livid fruit already dulling
sagging

on an autumnal doorstep
in a stone wind

leaf-waste and the chill
discussions of dust

the light inside gleaming
at all four windows of life

laughing
gusts of light

flickering, now guttering
ah the darkness——but

it brightens and again
life quickens, comic

intelligence leaps out
a quirk on the dark until

it can leap no more
falls, the darkness

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rushes in, tidal
over the smell

of snuffed wick and sweet
flesh overheated.

SCENIC

bank of fog
immense

dreamt marine
creature flowing

amorphous down the ravine
of the long mountain

into the couloir
as into a hole

slow motion
massive, unstoppable

the universe
star by star

emptying into the keyhole
in the box of sorrow

known as my absurd
head.

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METEOROLOGICAL

(for JL, fellow allergy-head)

is it that the weather implies an
enormous room in which it occurs?
a vast hall, for example. I see

this room dim & stonelike as if
king canute held court there, but
not directly, I see it in a mirror

or periscope which permits me to
observe weather at a distance, or
as if around a corner, and I do,

I see faint glowing rays of sun
superseded instantaneously by the
drizzling winds of storm, all in

the great distant room, so great
& distant that it seems not merely
somewhere else but in another

time, too, totally displaced; yet
I feel that weather, my nerves go
slack at the first hint of rain in

that wind or when the barometer on
that wall falls, and actually the
weather around the corner is more

like a chart or pictograph of my
state of mind, as if my feelings
were in king canute's fortress—

as of course they are. This is
what is meant by being a man, es-
pecially a poet, although no one

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lives altogether out of canute's
clutches, I suppose. This tells
us why all rules of conduct such

as revolutionary slogans contain
their own criticism, o tempora,
and are haunted by irrelevance.

RHOPALOCERAL

When these two butterflies flutter upward toward the blue-white agatine sky, defining in their dance of sex the loose twining rope that gleams with vacancy in the sun, my eyes frankly sink back and cannot climb with them: back to this end of the rope where the noose coils, dangles, calls.

Peculiar glitter, as of something false, associated with all symmetry. These two perfectly inversive wings; so bright, so fair to see. And those figures there, man and man, a face intent upon the surface of the pool.

Once a white butterfly made mirror-dancing with a white duck feather floating down the brook. Did I imagine that?

Two small azure butterflies dancing in a pool of dust by the road; from hill to opposing hill two chainsaws dissenting.

Wide blue sky. How many hundreds of centuries have men thought this the mirror of earth, as if our niggling particularities could be so smoothed and fused, instead of the mirror of what lies under the earth? We on the surface are in between, caught in a mighty reverberation of nothingness, shaken. Superficies. Powerless to deflect the organ tone that riddles us.

These are strange butterflies, brown and blue with spots of ivory; strangeness attracting special notice. Why not? I look into their symmetry as into a huge dim hall hung with tapestries on either side. I see that my imagination is the mirror of what lies there, out there; a mirror put into me like a foreign object.

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My being suffers anaphylaxis and tries to expel the irritant, but without success. It is I who am alien, I who am excluded. Symmetry is the sign of irrelation and death.

The function of self-consciousness is to carry, I mean literally to transport, these butterflies of the non-self. Can one think of any other? It is enslavement, granted. Why am I unconsoled to hear that my burden is only a butterfly?

When I thought to escape them they danced just outside the open window high over the city street, or rested opening and closing on the windowsill. When I hoped to join them they teased my clutching eyes across the country meadow, through the umbrageous woods.

Where am I? Not locus, but substantiation; not wherein nor whereon, but whereof. The crystal of windowpane contains, transports, transmits. I am "in" the lens of my eye. I am the veriest point of passage and reverberation.

O Blue-Brown-Ivory twining upward into the wide sky, how marvelous that you sustain my dead weight hanging here!

INTROSPECTIONAL

of the shadow cast by earth in the sun's light
way way way far away away across
the void

and of the shadow cast by earth in the light
of a far faint opposing star, cast
    like a pin in
the depths of the sun

rise & turn & sit down & raise my head
& smile and the dog
raises his head

& howls

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W. S. MERWIN

The Heart

In the first chamber of the heart
all the gloves are hanging but two
the hands are bare as they come through the door
the bell rope is moving without them
they move forward cupped as though
holding water
there is a bird bathing in their palms
in this chamber there is no color

In the second chamber of the heart
all the blindfolds are hanging but one
the eyes are open as they come in
they see the bell rope moving
without hands
they see the bathing bird
being carried forward
through the colored chamber

In the third chamber of the heart
all the sounds are hanging but one
the ears hear nothing as they come through the door
the bell rope is moving like a breath
without hands
a bird is being carried forward
bathing
in total silence

In the last chamber of the heart
all the words are hanging
but one
the blood is naked as it steps through the door
with its eyes open
and a bathing bird in its hands

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and with its bare feet on the sill
moving as though on water
to the one stroke of the bell
someone is ringing without hands

The Wine

With what joy I am carrying
a case of wine up a mountain
far behind me others
are being given their burdens
but I could not wait even for them

it is wine that I will not drink
I will not drink it not I
this wine
a signpost is swinging around
up in the woods in the fog
one way saying Almost one way Punished
in another language that I know
but no sign this way

by now all the stone railing
is fog
no longer does the dew brushed
from the pine needles onto my fingers
run down into my armpits
how cold my hands are
how awkward the wine is to carry
on my shoulder
that's part of the joy

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GEORGE STADE

K. Lorenz, and the Dog Beneath the Skin

I

ETHOLOGY IS THE BIOLOGY OF BEHAVIOR, the science of "comparative behavioral physiology." Its particular objects of study are the forms and movements of animals in their natural settings. Its point of departure and of rest is in the theory of evolution. The first and last thing an ethologist wants to know about the morphological or behavioral characters of a species is how these help the species to survive. For an evolutionist, to ask what a thing is for is to ask how it got that way; to investigate the adaptive function of a trait is to investigate the process that brought it into being. But between his first "what is it for" and his final "how did it get that way" the ethologist wants to know many other things.

He wants to know whether a sequence of behavior is set off by stimuli from within or from without the animal. He must concern himself, that is, with neurophysiology and endrocrinology on one hand, and with ecology and the psychology of perception on the other. He wants to know whether a trait is peculiar to an individual or characteristic of its species, its genus, its order. He must concern himself, in other words, with ontogeny (the developmental history of an individual) and phylogeny (the evolutionary history of a species), with genetics and taxonomy. He wants to know how fur, feather, or fin, how a disposition, capacity, or habit, is related to the whole of the animal, to the animal's conspecifics, and to the animal's extraspecific environment ("specific" is an adjective derived from "species"). Somewhere along the way he inevitably asks how what he has learned about other animals will apply to humans.

The founder of ethology and its greatest practitioner is Konrad Lorenz. The recent publication, in a scrupulously accurate English translation, of his collected papers, dating from 1931 to 1963,

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is an important event.[1] They reveal the variety and complexity of the data, as well as the theoretical finesse, upon which ethology is founded, but they also reveal the fissures and soft spots underlying Lorenz' books for the general reader, *Man Meets Dog* (1953), *King Solomon's Ring* (1952), and *On Aggression* (1963). They reveal how the methods and concepts that now make up the ethologist's equipment gradually emerged from patient observation; and in the process of showing that ethology has a past, they make clear how promising is its future. They require no more special knowledge from the reader than did, say, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* but they demand an equal willingness to engage difficult and unfamiliar ideas; they are equally concerned with the intricacies, rigidities, and fragilities of the mechanisms of behavior.

Among the rigidities of behavior the most rigid is the *fixed motor pattern,*[2] "the Archimedean point on which all ethological research is based," as Lorenz puts it. Fixed motor patterns—these "innate action and response norms," these "ready-formed species-specific functional lay-outs," these "rigidly-structured, phylogenetically inherited behavior patterns," as Lorenz variously refers to them—are inherited in the sense of being common to all healthy members of a species (like an infant's nursing movements), rather than special to individuals (like an ability to swallow swords). Each animal brings into the world a repertoire of fixed motor patterns that defines his membership in a species as precisely as do his morphological features. Such patterns evolve among the members of any species by the same processes of mutation and selection that shape bones, teeth, and silhouette. They are as invariable, in their temporal unfolding, as are the markings of a duck in their spatial distribution, and they are as immutable in the face of experience.

Once set off, in fact, a fixed motor pattern is very little subject to deflection by an internal or an external stimulus, unless the stimulus is as irresistible as, say, a ruptured aorta or a round of

[1] STUDIES IN ANIMAL AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, by *Konrad Lorenz.* Translated by Robert Martin. Vols. I and II. Harvard University Press. $11.75 each.

[2] The German word is *Erbkoordination,* or "inherited coordination." Ethologists writing in English usually write "fixed action pattern." In his earlier papers Lorenz used the terms *Triebhandlung* ("drive-operated activity") and *Instinkthandlung* ("instinct activity") and *angeborne Verhaltenwese* ("innate behavior pattern").

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buckshot. Certain insects will continue their mating ceremonies right to the end, no matter what—long after, for example, their prospective mates have been conspicuously removed. A fixed pattern is an indigestible chunk; it is virtually autonomous; it behaves "like an inorganic inclusion in the ambo-ceptor causal reticulum of the organic system." So long as the environmental conditions in response to which fixed patterns evolved remain unchanged, the rigidity of the patterns is of great survival value to the animal. They enable him to do things that he could never learn to do through insight, imitation, or trial and error:

> A young swift reared in a narrow cave in which it cannot extend its wings (far less beat them up and down), in which it cannot attain a sharp retinal image, as the farthest point of the cave is much nearer than its shortest focusing distance, and in which it cannot gain any experience on parallactic shifting of retinal images, nevertheless proves to be perfectly able on the very moment it leaves the nest cavity to assess distances by the parallactic shift of the object's images. It can also cope, in its rapid flight, with all the intricacies of air resistance, upcurrents, turbulence, and air pockets and can "recognize" and catch prey, and finally effect a precise landing in a suitable place. The information implicitly contained in the adaptive molding of all these forms of behavior to the environmental givens to which they indubitably do fit would fill many volumes. The description of the innate distance computers alone would contain whole textbooks of stereometry and that of the responses and activities of flying, an equal number of data on aerodynamics.

Thus knowledge stored in the genome, or set of chromosomes, and acquired through phylogeny is more subtle and more extensive than anything an animal can pick up in its lifetime; but it is like the knowledge that might allow a dancer to get up and pirouette in her sleep, rather than like the kind that allows a choreographer to organize pirouettes into a significant form. Animals run through their fixed patterns like sleepwalkers; they give no sign of an awareness that they go through these innate motions for a purpose—a purpose either of their own or of their species. Birds, for example, build nests not to provide for their young, but from a compulsion to build nests. They build them even if they have never seen eggs, even if they have been reared away from all other birds and every kind of nest. A female canary pushes loose strands of material into the cup

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of her nest with a special weaving movement. If reared in isolation it will still perform this weaving movement on the floor of its cage—but without strands and without nest. The bird knows neither what it is doing, nor why; neither what set the action off, nor what it is good for.

For all the zombie-like aspect of an animal enacting its fixed patterns, these are not reflexes, or unconditioned reflexes, or even chains of reflexes, though this is what for a long time Lorenz assumed, even asserted, they were. Reflexes can only be set off by external stimuli, but fixed patterns sometimes "explode" *in vacuo,* as Lorenz puts it, without any observable stimulus whatsoever:

> A hand-reared starling that I owned many years ago had never in its life caught flies nor seen any other bird do so. All his life he had taken his food from a dish, filled daily. One day I saw him sitting on the head of a bronze statue in my parents' Viennese flat, and behaving most remarkably. With his head on one side, he seemed to be examining the white ceiling, then his head and eye movements gave unmistakable signs that he was following moving objects. Finally he flew off the statue and up to the ceiling, snapped at something invisible to me, returned to his post, and performed the prey-killing movements peculiar to all insect-eating birds. Then he swallowed, shook himself, as many birds do at the moment of inner relaxation, and settled down quietly. Dozens of times I climbed on a chair, and even carried a step-ladder into the room—Viennese houses of that period have very high ceilings—to look for the prey that my starling had snatched: but not even the tiniest insect was there.

Such *Leerlaufreaktion,* or "vacuum activity," poses a problem. Lorenz, at first tentatively, but with increasing confidence as the evidence from neurophysiologists (especially Paul Weiss and Erich von Holst) began to accumulate, and as the opposition of behaviorists stiffened, postulated the "spontaneous, automatic-rhythmic" production by the central nervous system of "energy parcels" allotted to particular fixed motor patterns. These are produced automatically once the animal has reached a certain stage of maturation, no matter what its experience, or lack of it. They appear spontaneously and rhythmically even if the piece of spinal chord producing them has been severed from the animal's brain and from the nerves reaching to the animal's sensory receptors—its sole means of contact with the outside world. The *reaction-specific energy,* as it's sometimes called,

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accumulates between performances of the fixed pattern to which it is allotted. The pattern, once elicited, uses the accumulated energy up. But if after a critical period of time the pattern is not elicited, if, that is, the animal is isolated from the kind of natural situation in response to which the pattern evolved, the action specific energy may "overflow"; the pattern may explode in a stimulus vacuum. The canary then weaves invisible strands and the starling catches invisible flies.

The reaction specific energy is "dammed up," in other words, and the fixed pattern it tenders is "inhibited," by a "higher," or more centrally-organized, structural or functional system.

Each system is at once a part of another system and a whole made up of sub-systems. The function of any one sub-system is alternately released or inhibited by the more inclusive system of which it is a part, but once released it acts with relative autonomy, according to the instructions fed into it by its evolutionary history. The automatism of an instinctive behavior pattern, says Lorenz, "is virtually a closed system. It is subject to the systemic control of the central nervous system only with respect to the timing and degree of disinhibition." Although each functional or structural component is relatively autonomous, or closed, the components together form "a complex hierarchical system of reciprocal inclusion and exclusion of sequences of more restricted behavioral motivation." Imagine a tree growing upside down, the thickest part of the trunk on top and the branches spreading downward. At each junction of branch with trunk or branch with branch, there is a "center" that inhibits or releases the activity of the center below it and coordinates the activities among its various branches. Without this system of inclusions and inhibitions, the gazelle, say, might stop dead in its headlong flight from a lion to munch tender shoots from the top of a bush or to put on a courtship display before an enticing female.

Lorenz' centers, hierarchies, and levels of integration at first had roughly the status of Freud's topographical metaphors for the structure of the human psyche. Like Freud, Lorenz had hoped from the beginning that the physiological basis for his functional topography would ultimately be discovered. Like Freud, he had assumed from the beginning that "all 'pure' psychological processes are simultaneously neuro-physiological processes." Freud

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died still hoping, but neurophysiologists seem to have given Lorenz what he was looking for. I quote from Paul Weiss's *ex tempore* summing up of conclusions reached during the celebrated Hixon Conference of 1948, among whose participants were such distinguished scientists as H. Klover, Wolfgang Köhler, K. S. Lashley, W. S. McCullock, and Linus Pauling:

> . . . A few things have come out . . . for instance, the *relative autonomy of structured patterns of activity, and the hierarchical principle of their organization*. . . . The nervous system is not one big monotonic pool whose elements can be freely recombined in any number of groupings, thereby giving an infinite variety of nervous responses. This used to be the old idea of the associationists, and it is utterly incompatible with what we have learned about the development of the nervous system and its function in animals.
>
> The working of the nervous system is a hierarchical affair in which *functions at the higher levels do not deal directly with the ultimate structural units,* such as neurons or motor units, but operate by activating lower patterns that have their own relatively autonomous structural unity. The same is true for the sensory input which . . . operates by affecting, distorting, and somehow modifying the pre-existing, performed patterns of central co-ordination. . . . The final output is then the outcome of this hierarchical passing down of distortions and modifications of intrinsically preformed patterns of excitations which are in no way replicas of the input. *The structure of the input does not produce the structure of output, but merely modifies intrinsic nervous activities that have a structural organization of their own*. . . .
>
> . . . Any group of bulbar or spinal nerves taken from vertebrates, if deprived of their structural bonds of restraining influences and allowed to undergo a certain degree of degradation, will display permanent automatic, rhythmic, synchronized activity of remarkable regularity. Rhythmic activity, therefore, *seems a basic property of pools of nervous elements*. . . . The rhythm is not something generated through an input rhythm, but is itself a primary rhythm which may be released and even speeded up or retarded by the input, but is not derived from the input. So we have experimental evidence that *rhythmic automatism, autonomy of patterns, and hierarchical organizations are* primary attributes of even the simplest nervous systems, and I think that this unifies our view of the nervous system.

According to Weiss, and Lorenz, this unified view of the nervous system gives the *coup de grâce* to the behaviorist and reflexologist notion that animals, including human animals, do whatever

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they do just as they do it only because of stimulus input. They do as they do because of patterns of central co-ordination preformed by phylogeny and subject only to modification and timing by sensory input. The animal is not passive in the face of experience; it is not infinitely malleable; it is not silly putty or a bank of buttons and levers and slots. Against the contingencies of its individual experience it asserts the practical lessons built into its species by evolution.

II

We need to look at a few more items in the animal's behavioral repertoire before we can see which, if any, of them are also in the human's bag of tricks. The center governing a fixed pattern, then, is primed by endogenous-automatic nervous impulses. Its load may also be affected by hormones, by the integrating center above it, and by local stimuli from its chemical environment within the animal. The various centers are primed in sequence according to the workings of an internal clock, which has been synchronized by evolution to the normal seasonal and diurnal changes in the animal's ecological niche. Birds look for nesting materials *when* the weather is right, male mammals look for females *when* females are in estrus, frogs look for insects *when* insects have hatched, but not *because* the weather is right or females are in heat or flies are buzzing. Birds, males, and frogs look for nesting materials, females, and flies because of a kind of "arousal pressure"; the priming of particular centers with reaction-specific energy has given them something like an "appetite" for a performance of the fixed patterns that those centers control.

The arousal pressure nudges the animal off in search of the very particular set of external circumstances that will release the pattern under pressure. This search for a releaser, this *appetitive behavior,* as it is called, has the look of being purposive, because it exhibits "adaptive variability whilst the goal remains the same." The animal seems to know what it is looking for. Evolution, or conditioning, or individual experience, or the habits of the tribe, has taught the animal where to look for what it needs—such as a nest site or appropriate prey—but the

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animal can circumvent obstacles on its way and choose among alternative routes; it can explore and try things out. It seems almost human.

The whole sequence of actions, from the point of arousal to the discharge of the fixed motor patterns—from the migration north to the completion of the nest, from the meowing at the kitchen door to the slaughter of the field mouse—is usually made up of various behavioral elements intercalated with one another, some innate, some relatively *ad hoc*. In the appetitive behavior of higher animals, for example, there may be intercalation, in variable sequences and combinations, of reflexes, of conditioned responses, of subordinate fixed patterns, of *taxes* (or orienting responses, some of which are like what used to be called "tropisms"), and of intelligent or "insight-controlled" behavior, actions that solve problems without the governance of fixed patterns, or an antecedent term of learning. Appetitive behavior, says Lorenz, "extends from the simplest motor restlessness to the complex, purposive behavior patterns of human beings, involving an enormous variety of functions." From the abrupt turning of a frog toward a fly so that it may discharge the fixed pattern of shooting out its tongue, to Konrad Lorenz struggling to solve the mind-body problem, we have only differences of degree. "From the standpoint of objective ethology, no distinction can be made between the simplest orienting response and the higher form of 'insight' behavior."

All forms of appetitive behavior are alike, then, in that their goal is the discharge of reaction-specific energy. Prior to discharge, the accumulating energy is felt as a kind of tension or unease; discharge of the energy through the final motor pattern, or *consummatory act,* feels good. Because the consummatory act feels good, it serves as a reinforcement of the behavior that led up to it. The animal is therefore "driven and attracted" to perform the fixed patterns necessary for the survival of its species. And every fixed pattern, as Lorenz says, "is in itself an autonomous purpose as well as an autonomous reinforcement of precedent behavior." If you are an animal, at least, it feels good to do what is good for you, and what is good for you is also good for your species.

Under normal conditions, the consummatory motor pattern

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is performed not *in vacuo,* but amidst the particular kind of environmental situations in response to which it evolved. In most cases the animal does not recognize the situation as being of a certain kind, one in which, for example, its particular food is available or in which it is in danger from a predator; such recognition would depend on an ability to abstract and generalize that few animals have. Instead, most animals have an innate capacity to recognize certain representative elements, or *key stimuli,* as English-writing ethologists call them, that are regular concomitants of the situation. An ethologist with a literary bent might call them "synecdotal stimuli." They are called key stimuli because they fit an innate receptor correlate as a key fits a lock. When stimulus key fits receptor lock an *innate releasing mechanism* is activated. The innate releasing mechanism removes the block that had been inhibiting the fixed motor pattern in question. Upon disinhibition the animal pecks, gapes, preens, bristles, broods, flees, fights, copulates, displays its colors, tends its young, or changes color, depending on which fixed pattern in which animal has been released.

One category of triggering stimuli has especially interested would-be ethologists of human behavior, mostly cranks. Such stimuli are the morphological or behavioral features that coordinate the fixed patterns among members of a given species. A scent, a sound, an electrical charge; the display of a marking, a silhouette, a configuration, or a fixed pattern, will under appropriate circumstances and at appropriate stages in the animal's maturation, release a reciprocal fixed pattern in a conspecific. A herring gull chick pecks at the red dot on its parent's bill; the parent regurgitates food; the chick eats. Both the red dot and the chick's pecking are what Lorenz calls *Auslöser,* usually translated as "social releasers." The red dot releases the pecking; the pecking releases the regurgitation (which, so to speak, releases the food). But most of the gorgeous colors and improbable shapes of animals; their various ritualized motor displays of presenting, appeasement, enticement, and challenge; the perfume of their ruts and the accents of their cries—all these are likely to be social releasers. They are most likely to be social releasers if they seem unadaptive, if they seem to reduce the animal's ability to function and survive, if, for example, they make

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him conspicuous to predators or clumsy in form or movement.

Social releasers and their receptor correlates differentiate through a kind of dialectic and along parallel lines; they evolve in response to a selection pressure working out of relations among members of a specific population, rather than in response to pressures working out of the relations between a population and its environment. The pressures making for differentiation, that is, are intraspecific rather than extraspecific. The gratuitous quality of many social releasers, their quality of *gestural exaggeration,* results from the relative strength of intraspecific, as compared to extraspecific, selecting factors, and makes them that much more useful as signals. They differentiate in the direction of maximal simplicity of structure with maximal improbability of form. Lorenz cites the yawn as an example of a social releaser among humans. A number of his popularizers cite the breasts of human females, which are the only kind that remain extended all year round and which would be easier for babies to nurse on if they were smaller; and popularizers cite the buttocks of human females, which in their gratuitous bloom have no equivalent in the animal world—the popularizers cite breasts and buttocks as social releasers of, at the least, appetitive behavior in human males. The consummatory act is released by something else.

III

The paradigm of a typical behavioral sequence, then, is as follows: (1) at a certain stage in the animal's maturation, a stage synchronized by evolution with a certain point in the day or year, (2) an accumulation of reaction-specific energy leads to a state of arousal or motivation, which (3) generates appetitive behavior consisting of various intercalated motor components, some innate, some learned, until (4) the animal comes upon the key stimulus (which may be a social releaser) that (5) activates the particular innate releasing mechanism whose function it is to disinhibit (6) the consummatory act, a fixed pattern concluding the sequence and using up the reaction-specific energy.

Many contingencies may complicate the paradigm or interfere

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with the sequence of its unfolding. If the reaction-specific energy for a certain fixed motor pattern is low, either because not much has yet accumulated or because repeated performance of the pattern has exhausted it; or if the key stimuli releasing the fixed pattern are either partial or of weak intensity, the pattern may only begin to go off. The animal only gets as far as an *intention movement.* If the intention movement occurs frequently enough, it may take on signal functions. The jackdaw's crouch preparatory to flight may warn its fellows that a predator is in the distance. Through selective pressures the intention movement may jell, differentiate further, undergo gestural exaggeration, and become the kind of social releaser called a *symbolic motor pattern,* now entirely distinct from its initial function. If, conversely, the reaction-specific energy for a certain fixed pattern becomes unusually high, the pattern may go off *in vacuo* or in the presence of inappropriate stimuli; or the energy may "overflow" (in the hydraulic metaphor) or "spark over" (in the electrical metaphor) and release a different fixed pattern. Such *displacement activities,* such sparking over, may also occur when a single situation activates the innate releasing mechanisms for two fixed patterns. A bird equally motivated to fight and to run may instead peck at the ground, or even fall asleep. Displacement activities may also jell, differentiate, encourage the selection of receptor correlates, and become ritualized into symbolic motor patterns. In situations of extreme conflict or deprivation or novelty, a fixed pattern may be activated that is not normally in the species' repertoire but that was in the repertoire of the genus from which the species differentiated. Extreme conflict, or deprivation or novelty, that is, may produce *regression,* a return to the phylogenetic past. A habit accidentally acquired may inhibit the fixed pattern adaptive to the situation; one fixed pattern accidentally triggered may inhibit or deform the adaptive one; the slightest inherited or acquired physical defect may twist fixed patterns into amazing behavioral oddities. Innate "gaps" left in motor patterns, normally filled by experience, may be filled with the wrong objects. An animal may *imprint* its caretaker; it may become permanently fixated on him, so to speak, as the proper object of an innate pattern, rather than on another member of its own species; it may then act

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toward the caretaker as if he were its mother or its mate. "Greater snow geese (*Anser hyperboreus atlanticus*), and probably many others possess perfectly good phylogenetic information about how a fellow member of the species behaves when inviting copulation, but they have to learn what a fellow member of the species looks like." Case histories of fetishism, of animals fixated by imprinting on substitute objects, abound in the literature of ethology.

The literature of ethology, in fact, demonstrates vividly enough just how easy it is to make animals do things that among humans would be called neurotic or crazy. The fixed patterns of animals are so dependent for their regular functioning upon a normal upbringing and upon a characteristic set of experiences; they are so intricately meshed with the different action patterns of mates, rivals, parents and offspring; with prey and predator, host and parasite; with the lay of the land and the course of the season; that only minor modifications of these by natural accident or experimental design may shock the animal into an exemplary lunacy. Animals so shocked become compulsive, as though gripped by an obsession. They burst into inexplicable rages or fall into fatal melancholias. They seem to hallucinate the key stimuli they are deprived of; they court phantoms, joust with shadows, feed on air, and display before mirages. They cower shaking before their natural prey. They brood stuffed replicas of their natural enemies and murder their offspring. They develop ovarian cysts, prostate trouble, and various kinds of cancer. They scratch, peck, claw, and bite themselves or each other bloody. They treat everything presented to them as though it were a threat; they become as though suspicious and fearful of everything. They develop an anxiety that seems to float free of any external cause or past experience. Above all they act like characters in Bergson's treatise on comedy. In their solemn self-absorption, their mulish lack of self-awareness, their fits and starts, they blunder along as mute and dead-pan as Buster Keaton, like wind-up toys with rusty springs, like puppets jerked by strings in the hands of mischievous children, like victims of demonic possession, like comic humors in ritual bondage to fixed ideas.

They only seem to act that way in the eyes of a human ob-

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server, no doubt. My language, no doubt, has been unscientifically anthropomorphic. What we call neurotic, an ethologist would call unadaptive. But by "adaptive" he means no more than "just good enough for the survival of the species." And even under the best of conditions, there are endless opportunities for behavior that at the very least has a low survival value, given the way evolution puts things together:

> Organisms are *never* built on the principle which must be postulated on the basis of preformationistic concepts, that is to say, like buildings whose function a far-seeing architect foresaw, whose smallest details were agreed upon before the first stone was laid, and whose actual erection then took place all in one sitting. Organisms are always constructed on the principle on which a house is built by a settler, who first erects a simple provisional shack in which to live, and who later on, as his affluence and his family increase, adds one piece after the other to the building. In such a house, many parts will, in the course of time, change their functions completely: What first was the living room, may become the stable or even the lumber room; compromises and temporary shifts will become necessary. The efficiency of the building as a whole will necessarily remain inferior to that which could be achieved by the construction of a planning architect, but the latter is unattainable just *because* the house has to be lived in all the time and can never be torn down altogether and wholly reconstructed.

We have to revise, therefore, our first provisional topography of the systems that govern and execute an animal's behavior. Instead of one neat functional hierarchy, each sub-system of which is integrated by a center subordinate to centers above it and in control of the centers beneath it, we must think of many hierarchies, at all angles to each other and some of them not so hierarchical. The hierarchies are all of different sizes, shapes, powers, and ages—in both the history of the species and the history of the individual. Any two of them may intersect here, overlap there, interlock there, and share a part somewhere else. The waxing of one may famish another and fatten still a third. Any new one may make an old one vestigial, make another hyperactive, and fight still another to a standstill. Any hierarchy may release, inhibit, encroach upon, and cooperate with, others, or parts of others, to different degrees, at different times, under different conditions, and not always to the animal's ben-

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efit. We have to imagine, then, not a single tree growing upside down, with the thickest part of the trunk on top and the branches spreading downward, but a whole forest of trees and shrubs of different kinds, ages, rates of growth, fruit, foliage, pliancy, and rigidity, all crowded together in all the possible permutations of symbiosis, parasitism, and competition, stealing light and nourishment from each other or sharing it, the branches inextricably tangled or connected by creepers hung with tropical moss.

This monstrous contrivance, assembled in a fit of distraction by a stinting and impatient Frankenstein (as passages in Lorenz make us see it), works well enough to preserve if not the animal, at least the population of which it is a member, so long as the conditions that brought the machinery into existence prevail. But any contingency not prepared for by phylogeny, any deprivation of nourishment or experience, any shock or set of conflicting key stimuli may drive the whole contraption careening off course, spilling gears and flywheels, or pull it apart. As W. H. Thorpe, an English ethologist, notes, "In some species of starfish the lack of coordination between the arms occasionally results in the animal actually being pulled in two merely by the antagonistic activity of its own tube feet." Analogous things happen to all animals. When such things happen, they are unadaptive, sure enough, but they occur because of what successive adaptations have put together. The provisions for something like madness are species-specific to all species of animals, including the human animal.

IV

At the moment, says Lorenz, the scientific investigation of human behavioral specifics has only stumbled a step or two beyond Darwin. So far, the drafting of a detailed and complete human *ethogram,* or behavioral map in evolutionary perspective, is no more than a program, although there is no more urgent a need. It takes years of patient observation before an ethologist is ready to rough in the behavioral contours of one simpleminded bird or fish; a scientifically respectable ethogram of *homo sapiens* will require the life work of many cartographers of behavior—

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among whom Lorenz expressly does not include the social scientists, who in his eyes are mostly not scientists at all.[3] Even when the work of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists meets the standards that apply in the natural sciences it does not furnish the ethologist with what he needs. And because ethology operates on a "more general" level of explanation, it would similarly be "an illegitimate extension" for ethologists to explain ethologically "any complex special principles governing human intellectual or social life"; at the same time it would be an avoidance of responsibility were ethologists, or students of "comparative behavioral physiology," as Lorenz often describes his field, not to explain what they can about the more general processes underlying those specifics of human intellectual and social life:

> If we, as natural scientists, wish to provide a natural explanation for the special, immeasurably complex principles governing human behavior and the human mind (i.e. by tracing them back to the adjacent, more general level of natural principles), then we are faced with the question: "What *are* these more basic principles?" There can be no other answer: "The principles concerned are *those which govern the behavior of living organisms in general.*"

When the social sciences begin to elucidate human social and intellectual life on the basis of principles that in theory at least can be traced back to those governing the behavior of living organisms in general, which latter principles can themselves be traced back to those governing the movements of inorganic matter, there will be at last a unification of the sciences, and the social sciences at last will become natural.

Lorenz' argument to this point is professionally self-serving but plausible, especially if one is not a mystic. Certainly the absence of an inclusive theory, against which both the unlikely and the significant might leap into focus, explains as well as anything why the data amassed by the social sciences are in the main either soft or trivial. Lorenz feels that much of Marx and Freud will survive the unification, or naturalization, so to speak, of the social sciences. He speaks with enthusiasm of "the pro-

[3] Lorenz does not seem to know the work of Erving Goffman, who, so far, has done more toward the constructing of a human ethogram than any ethologist. With respect to his studies of human interaction, says Goffman, "it is from ethology that the basic concepts come." See *Relations in Public* (New York: Harper Colophon paperback, 1972), p. 59.

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gressive unification of ethology and psychoanalysis," and of Marx he says: "Everything he said in *Capital* is right, but he always made the error of forgetting the instincts." In my opinion a unified theory of human behavior built up on what is consistent in psychoanalysis, Marxism, and ethology would be something worth having, but I doubt that it would look like anything either psychoanalysts, Marxists, or Lorenz have in mind.

In any case, Lorenz is very anxious to counter the charge that measuring the degree of human singularity against the principles that govern the behavior of living organisms in general is a way of shortchanging that singularity. Far from trying to make the human element fade into its animal background, ethologists, says Lorenz, provide the point of view from which human singularity is thrown most dramatically into relief. We can only see what constitutes the naked and native dignity of man, and where it came from, against the background of those evolutionary processes in which all animals live, and move, and have their being. All human traits, whether they are universal, such as the facial expressions that accompany anger or terror and such as incest taboos, or whether they are culturally diversified, such as ideas of history and definitions of incest, are either the direct products of evolution or are based on dispositions and capacities that are themselves the direct products of evolution. "Behavior is adapted to environmental givens and it can only be thus adapted by two well-defined processes, phylogenetic adaptation and adaptive modification"—by habits picked up during the evolutionary history of the species and by social and individual modifications of those habits.

As it turns out, the human elements in human behavior that comparative behavioral physiology throws into relief are both disappointing and reassuring in their familiarity. They are as follows: (1) The degree to which humans are capable of reason, the most complex kind of appetitive behavior, and are capable of "insight," the sudden apprehension of relations and analogies. (2) "The unique, phylogenetically unprecedented phenomena of rational responsibility," through which men may repress a natural inclination in behalf of an ethical idea or social imperative. (3) Culture, which is based on an "accumulation of tradition [that] is practically equivalent to the inheri-

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tance of acquired characteristics," and which is as essential to the mind as food is to the body. Because "man's whole system of innate activities and reactions is phylogenetically so constructed, so 'calculated' by evolution, as to *need* to be complemented by cultural tradition," anyone so unlucky as to be reared without it would be a "poor cripple," functionally indistinguishable from an idiot whose cerebral cortex had been destroyed in some intra-uterine disaster. (4) Speech, which seems to have evolved for the express purpose of handling and passing on culture: "It was indubitably the selection pressure of accumulating tradition which caused the rapid growth of the human telencephalon," which contains the speech center. (5) Self-awareness, the human's capacity for objectifying himself. "The best definition of man is that he is the one creature capable of reflection, of seeing himself in the frame of reference of the surrounding universe." To the extent that a man is self-aware he moves out of the realm of irony, in which he is possessed and driven by demonic obsessions, to the realm of comedy, in which his pretentions are mocked, although his impulses are confirmed, by natural energies. (6) Most inclusive among the human elemental capacities and dispositions, one that amounts to "the constitutive character of man," is an innate, unique, and lifelong curiosity, a drive to investigate and explore, which impels any healthy human into a "continuous, inquisitive communication with extra-subjective reality," into an "active, dialectic construction and dismemberment of the environment," so that information may be picked up and stored as engrams in the central nervous system for future use, and so that bit by bit a significant, thoroughly objectivized world solidifies to enclose the very animal who alone can see it in the round.

All this amounts to the conclusion that human action when exemplary in its humanity, rather than human-all-too-human in its subservience to the dog beneath the skin, is a full, delicate, finely attuned, continuously adjusting responsiveness to all the particulars of whatever the situation, as successively it unfolds. But this singular responsiveness is no miracle, the product of a cosmic purpose or occult will; it is in theory perfectly explicable by a convergence of certain of the processes that shape the differentia of all species. Neoteny, for example, the preservation

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throughout maturity of traits that in ancestral species were only characteristic of infants and foetuses, has been observed in numerous species, but only in conjunction with the other adaptive strategies that shaped humanity did it make possible the lifelong playfulness and curiosity of men and women. Similarly, our descent from a tree-living primate that climbed by means of grasping extremities, rather than by hooking claws, explains, given everything else, our capacity for stereoscopic depth-perception, for a central representation of spatial relations that developed finally into a sort of "imagination-space," in which hypothetical situations might be visualized. "And this is the beginning of all thinking processes," as well as the prerequisite for the making of tools. Again, the evolution of our versatile, non-specialized, physical traits included the development of an equal behavioral versatility. The fact that we are adapted to no one environment means that we can adapt to many. We are, says Lorenz, "specialists in nonspecialization." No other one animal can climb twenty feet up a rope *and* swim fifty feet underwater at a depth of two fathoms *and* walk twenty miles in a day; our modes of perception and conception are correlative in their range and plasticity. Finally, domestication is primarily a condition in which selection by extra-specific pressures no longer takes place; "human self-domestication" produced effects homologous to those that domestication produced in barnyard fowl and dogs. Domestication is accompanied by increased physical and behavioral variation among individuals within a species; by the atrophy of more recent drives, such as those having to do with brood care and social life; by the hypertrophy of more primitive drives, such as those having to do with feeding and mating; by a reduction in the selectivity of innate releasing mechanisms, so that substitute stimuli may serve as releasers; by a general dismantling of fixed patterns and inhibitions, so that the patterns and bits of patterns may be employed for novel situations and in novel combinations, and so that intelligence and improvisation may fill the gaps. "The constitutive *freedom* of human behavior is the direct result of domestication-induced reduction of rigid instinctive behavior," but it is a freedom as phylogenetically adapted as the opposability of our thumbs.

Less familiar, less reassuring, and more difficult to take, is

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Lorenz' insistence that much of human behavior, especially human social behavior, is directed by a complex of releasers, innate releasing mechanisms, motor display patterns, endogenous-automatic accumulations of reaction-specific energy, and dispositions to learn only certain kinds of things under only special circumstances at only specific stages in the course of individual development. Imprinting-like phenomena, or fixations, sometimes seem to occur at various more or less well-defined points from infancy through adolescence, and movements like those of swallowing and ejaculation may be genuine fixed patterns; but for the most part the accumulation of reaction-specific energy in a human does not lead to the performance of a fixed motor pattern. More characteristically it leads to an intention movement that has evolved into a motor display pattern—one of those postures, gestures, or facial expressions that can tell us at a glance whether a fellow human from anywhere in the world is angry or happy, hostile, or flirtatious. According to Iranäus Eibel-Eibesfelt, one of Lorenz' students, "smiling, laughing, and crying, also the expressions of anger, pouting, fear, and sadness, looked the same in blind-born children, although they could not have imitated anyone." When display patterns are genuine social releasers they fit receptor correlates that evolved along with them and that enable us to understand the "meaning," in one sense of the word, of the display. We do not have to learn, for example, that a snarl is a snarl. Reception of the display (the snarl), activates the appropriate innate releasing mechanism, which in a human, however, releases not a fixed pattern (another snarl), but an *emotion* (fear or anger). The emotion had been the "subjective experiential correlate" of a fixed pattern that has since dropped out, thus leaving the emotion as the sole automatic component of any response. Lorenz argues that the qualitatively separable human emotions are each based on "an action-specific arousal modality and behavioral motivation. With very many of these specific behavioral motivations, assumption of an endogenous-automatic basis is supported by the fact that the stimulus threshold shrinks during periods without response and rises following abreaction of the drive concerned." After a good venting of fear or anger, for example, we feel relieved, all passion spent.

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In some cases, then, endogenous-automatic stimulation generates a motive and primes an emotion. Not all physiological processes prime motives, but all emotions are signs of an instinctive process. Our gut reactions, whether aesthetic or moral, to fellow humans comprise an especially instructive category. "The close interaction and the far-reaching analogies between instinctive and culturally determined norms of behavior notwithstanding, I am quite convinced that, at the root of every emotional value judgment, an innate releasing mechanism lies concealed." Lorenz goes on to argue that the aesthetic and ethical emotions are logically distinguishable but functionally inseparable. Aesthetically speaking,

> our emotional value judgment categorizes as repulsive characters which have arisen through typical domestication effects, whilst characters which are threatened by the same effects of domestication are classed as desirable. There is scarcely one typical domestication effect in the morphological realm, which does not evoke our pronounced aesthetic revulsion. Almost more important than this statement is the fact that the converse also applies; virtually all characters which we perceive as specifically ugly are genuine domestication effects.
>
> Muscular flabbiness, a hanging stomach, weak connective tissue and their side-effects such as flabby skin, bow-leggedness and so on, relatively small looking eyes, expressionless facial features lacking in "striking" qualities, pug head and many other "ugly characters" are typical results of domestication. If a large series of wild forms and their domestic derivatives is assembled, one is again and again amazed by the "beauty" and "nobility" of the wild animals in comparison to the domestic forms.
>
> . . . The same correlation exists between our ethical evaluation feelings and domestication-induced alterations of behavior as between aesthetic feelings and morphological domestication characters. In this case, too, the ethically highly valued behavior patterns are just exactly those which are adversely affected by domestication-induced deficiency, whilst those judged to be "bad" and inferior are those which tend toward hypertrophy through domestication.
>
> Among the endogenous-automatic behavior patterns of human beings, each was originally equally valuable and necessary for the preservation of the species—food-uptake and mating just as much as parental care responses or more highly differentiated social impulses. The fact that we perceive one to be ethically valueless, indeed sinful, and the other as a highly estimable moral attribute, is no doubt closely related to the fact that the former are over-de-

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veloped in civilized human beings just as in domestic animals, whilst the latter tend to disappear.

I quote this passage at length because it is probably wrong in detail and just possibly sinister in implication. The domesticated thoroughbred horse, for example, is more "noble" in appearance than the wild hammer-head cayuse. The German Shepherd dog is at least as noble as the jackal, from which, says Lorenz, it was bred. And it is unlikely that domestication can worsen the looks, or the morals, of the hippopotamus. Further, the flabby muscles, hanging stomachs, and so forth, of humans are not effects of domestication in the same sense that they are in, say, the Muscovy duck: in humans they are not inherited, they are not universal, and they can be eliminated during the lifetime of an individual by exercise and diet. At the same time, I find it plausible that, cosmetic fashions aside, the people of all cultures respond with innate approval to the athletic type of body that is best adapted to grapple with a rigorously selective environment. And I find it plausible that if, as Chomsky says, the child is born "with a perfect knowledge of universal grammar, that is, with a fixed schematism that he uses . . . in acquiring language," he is also born with a fixed inclination to approve some kinds of human actions and bodily shapes and to disapprove others.

If Lorenz is right, our innate approvals and disapprovals will often conflict with precepts we arrive at through reason and with injunctions that support the institutions of our society. We may find ourselves liking people whose morals we consciously disapprove and disliking people whose morals are irreproachable. We find it hard not to sympathize with violent men, if they are also men of "honor," by which I mean the constellation of values that tends to prevail among primitive hunters, rather than among agriculturists. Those groups and individuals who are driven above all by a desire to amass or preserve honor, usually by counting coups or exacting revenge, tend to get our imaginative sympathy and our moral disapproval. To most people the ferocity of ancient Greeks, questing knights, Renaissance princes, Plains Indians, Italian *mafiosi,* Japanese samurai, teenage gangs, western heroes, and private eyes is both

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attractive and lamentable. We are likely to think that there is something wrong with a young man who would rather have been St. Francis than Achilles, but it is not so easy to say why. The examples are mine, and I am not sure that Lorenz would endorse them, but the point is his: our innate judgments in practice often over-ride our rational commitments and social allegiances.

None of that is news. More unexpected is Lorenz' argument that as much trouble is caused by the loss of certain innate action-and-response norms as by the preservation of those that have become dysfunctional under the conditions of advanced industrial society. A whole set of "the more finely differentiated social instincts and inhibitions" has been dismantled by domestication, or has been gradually selected out by the increasing human reliance for behavioral directives on abstract principles, social imperatives, cultural ideals, and novel ecologies. At one time, presumably, social instincts and inhibitions made relations between men and men, men and women, parents and children, brothers and sisters, the individual and his group a kind of dance in which everyone knew the steps and the musicians always played in tune. Life was no doubt harsh and short; not, however, because of the way individuals within a group treated each other. But for a long time now, except among a few forest peoples, freedom from social instincts and inhibitions has had a positive selective value. The behavioral traits that on ancient grounds we still judge to be ugly or wrong have become the very ones that enable those who have them to sit pretty. Avarice, treachery, cowardice, ingratitude, assertiveness, disloyalty, random promiscuity, ruthless ambition, "emotional deficiency and value blindness," neglect of young children and aged parents, were once as unadaptive as they were repulsive—repulsive because they were unadaptive. Now they are just repulsive. At one time, again presumably, they were held in check or were selectively and adaptively directed by superordinate instinctive mechanisms. But in some cases "headlong, culturally determined changes in human sociology and ecology" have at once routed the inhibitions and inflamed what they were inhibiting.

Lorenz' remarks about the "pervading degeneration" of our social instincts under the effects of domestication probably sound

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cranky, the sort of thing one might expect from a man who has spent fifty years studying animals and noting how much more healthy and attractive they are in the wild. But it has been easy for many people to arrive at similar conclusions on different grounds. It is not only students of animal behavior who have observed "how abjectly stupid and undesirable the mass behavior of humanity actually is." Lorenz is not the first to have commented on "the pathological disintegration of our social structure" or the "catastrophic social confusion of mankind." All kinds of people agree that "at the moment, humanity represents a functional entity which has gone fundamentally awry." Lorenz is not the only student of behavior who has been led to conclude that "discomfort within our culture" is inevitable, that neurosis, given the social circumstances within which our natural inclinations must now express themselves, is also inevitable, that, in sum, "we are all—without exception—psychopaths." Neither is he the only observer to have pointed out that the conditions of advanced industrial society bring out the worst in people. And I find it hard to see how one can disagree with his claim that "the danger to modern man arises not so much from his power of mastering natural phenomena as from his powerlessness to control sensibly what is happening in his own society."

For all that, Lorenz and his conclusions have been attacked with some heat, mostly on political grounds. The ethologists' claim that individual behavior and social institutions are still shaped by instinctual residues, and especially Lorenz' claim that aggression is caused by the endogenous-automatic accumulation of reaction specific energy, have lead to charges that his attacks on modern social conditions are merely the grumbling of a conservative, if not the bile of a reactionary or the ravings of a fascist. The charges would hold better if Lorenz were a conservative or if the implications of ethology were not in fact revolutionary. So far as I can tell the charges are supported mostly by rumor, by a confusion of Lorenz with Robert Ardrey and Desmond Morris, both of whom he disowns in the introduction to Volume I of *Studies in Animal and Human Behavior,* by a misreading of the first eleven chapters of *On Aggression,* and, more reasonably, by reference to the traditional connection between conservatism and some sacred or secular notion of original sin.[4]

[4] See Ashley Montagu, ed., *Man and Aggression* (Oxford University Press, 1968).

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The conservative tends to assume that we are naturally vicious and that only good institutions can keep us in line; the Left usually assumes that we are naturally good or naturally nothing and that only bad institutions make us vicious. Lorenz for his part insists again and again that "the imagination of man's heart is not really evil from his youth up, as we read in Genesis." In various works and in different words he keeps saying, "we fundamentally disagree with the biblical thesis defended by some child psychologists and psychoanalysts, that man is utterly 'wicked from childhood on.'" Lorenz' opinion, rather, is that "man can behave very decently indeed in tight spots, provided they are of a kind that occurred often enough in the paleolithic period to produce phylogenetically adapted social norms to deal with the situation," or provided that stress, overwork, hunger, anxiety, hopelessness, and overcrowding have not subverted his reason or his instinctive aestheticoethical value judgments.

I have not been able to find anywhere a full statement by Lorenz of his politics, but it is easy enough to judge where he stands from his scattered remarks on the issues of the day—he stands in that shifting and uncircumscribed zone in which left-liberalism, social democracy, and democratic socialism jostle one another. He supports, for example, much of women's liberation: he speaks of young wives as "a whole class of people who are treated as slaves and who are exploited shamelessly." He attacks as he tries to account for "demagogically directed mass cruelty, such as witchcraft trials or anti-semitic persecution." He has no use for nationalism, imperialism, or racism: "National ideas were still serviceable for our grandparents. During the time of Rudyard Kipling, the norms of social behavior he wrote about were valid for his epoch and his country. Transposed into our time, Kipling results in Hitler—just as imperialist and just as racist." In the early 1960s he observed that "the way in which huge numbers of young Americans have recently identified themselves with the rights of the American Negro is a glorious exception" to the political apathy of the young; and now in the 1970s he supports the "student protestors"; he believes that "youth sees very clearly the great faults committed by the 'Establishment'"; he believes that the accusations of the young are "frequent, necessary, and absolutely just"; he joins with

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them in trying to expose "the real obsolescence of many social norms and rites still valued by some of the older generation." He has written at considerable length and with some vehemence against the evils that accompany military fanfare, militant enthusiasm, and charismatic leaders. He is pacifistic and perhaps a pacifist (he managed to stay out of World War II for the first few years and then served as a field surgeon). His arguments with behaviorists are more than academic: their ideas, he says, are helping to bring about "the best of all possible worlds for the Russian apparatchiks or the American monopolists"; for "as far as mass manipulators are concerned, the Pavlovian dog is the ideal citizen." And his remarks on the consequences of domestication do not constitute social Darwinism, but the opposite.

All this does not amount to a politics, of course, but it disqualifies Lorenz for fascism. Although his feelings on the practical issues of the day are those characteristic of left-liberals, his deepest impulses, I suspect, are anarchic. To an interviewer from *L'Express* he said, "I'm against everything, against all the ideologies, all the regimes in the world. Except perhaps the Dubček regime, which no longer exists. It's the only regime that would have been able to get my vote." An anarchist maybe, or simply a political *naïf,* but a humane, humanistic, kindly, and even tender-hearted one, as every page of his writings on humans and animals shows. There is a grave and rich music to Lorenz' pessimism; it is orchestrated by an old-fashioned love of humanity and counterpointed by the "Avowal of Optimism" that concludes *On Aggression,* an avowal based on the virtues built into us by our evolutionary past. And it was precisely because he believes in those virtues, and because he is so "naive" as to be appalled by the universal slaughter and disorder that he wrote *On Aggression* (although his evidence, as he knew, was far from conclusive) rather than because he believed that since our nature is fixed and fallen, social revolution is useless. In fact, his avowal of optimism rests on the belief that our evolutionary past will demand a revolutionary future.

More important than Lorenz' personal feelings about things are the political implications of ethology. These are, simply, that we have ineradicable needs and inclinations. Societies vary in the extent to which they permit the irreducibly human in us

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to find satisfaction. Societies that satisfy the irreducibly human in us very little turn us into psychopaths. Such ideas strike me as comprising a basis for slogans as good as any we have around.

I also think we are ready for the ethologist's shift of emphasis from the socio-historical dimension in people to the individual and human dimensions. I, for one, am tired of being encouraged to think of myself as entirely the product of historical accidents and social contingencies. The ethologist redirects our attention to "the influence exerted by the structure of the individual within an organic system upon the structure of the super-individual society." He insists that "there are very many qualities of an individual which can indeed only be 'understood' through the structure of the total entity, but which the individual possesses as innate, inherited features and not as traditionally transmitted acquisitions." The ethologist also insists that what the individual asserts against the crush of his society is precisely what he shares with the individuals in all societies. He insists further that what humans share unites them with nature: "We consider the moral law within us not as something given, a priori, but as something which has arisen by natural evolution, just like the laws of the heavens." Ethology provides the philosophic basis for an ethic that shares Spinoza's main assumption and some of his sublimity:

> We all agree that the greatest and most precious freedom of man is identical with the moral laws within him. Increasing knowledge of the natural causes of his own behavior can certainly increase a man's faculties and enable him to put his free will into action, but it can never diminish his will. If, in the impossible case of a utopian, complete, and ultimate success of causal analysis, man ever should achieve complete insight into the causality of earthly phenomena, including the workings of his own organism, he would not cease to have a will but it would be in perfect harmony with the incontrovertible lawfulness of the universe, the *Weltvernunft* of the Logos.

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R. G. VLIET

Rockspring

For Ann

I

TEXAS, 1830, AND THEY WERE BAREFOOT and hadn't ought to be, for they'd roused up a rattler already this morning to crawling on its bellyscales. But she allowed it was the sun brought it out, for all it was October. And it was a fine sun, to reach down between the trees and piece the ground to such a yellow and darkness at her feet.

Jensie walked through the leaves, it felt so good. Thousands and thousands of leaves, as if fall like some painted Indian had shot them down—pecan leaves, all yellow and spotted and pointing to a sharpness that half tickled her feet, and curled up and nicked her ankles as she crunched them. Now if every arrowhead the Indians ever shot was to be raked together, she thought, would they at all fill the whole ground like this, I wonder? This one patch of trees near the river.

Here was a sunny place. Jensie stooped down. She set her gourd careful on the ground and commenced picking fat leaves of sheepsorrel from their straws. These grow like arrowheads too. But they can't hurt you. Jensie rubbed her forefinger across a leaf's soft undersides. Mix them with vinegar for rhubarb pie. Mama'll be proud to get them. Jensie stuffed the leaves into the gourd. Now she almost had a gourdful.

"Jensie," her little brother cried up in a fret, "the Injuns'll *git* you if you don't quit pickin' their veggables." Then, with all the orneryness he had in him, he eased a stem between two of his toes and hiked it up, scattering dirt from its roots everywhere.

"Quit it, Dee, can't you?" Jensie said. "Don't you want Mama to make us no rhubarb pie?"

"I wanna go home. It's dinner. Them leaf's is too old any-

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ways, and Mama'll toss 'em right back out. Come on, Jensie, you got us all the way downstream. We can't even hear Daddy choppin'." Their daddy in the brush-clearing near the cabin, chopping cornstalks to winter-feed the cow. And it was Jensie's birthday almost—just two more weeks—and that's when they would have their first bread since they come here. A party. Mama was saving the first time for that. Grated corn skillet-bread mixed with milk, and yes her a new dress made from that chambry in the chest, brought all the way from San Antonio, and yes she was fourteen might'near and for sure wasn't going to let Dee boss her.

"Well, I want a great big juicy green rhubarb pie for supper," Jensie said.

"We got us a whole sackful of pee-cans up under that tree there," Dee said. "That's what we was sent for. Not no stinkin' veggables."

Because he was such a bother sometimes, no good at all, and sometimes she just hated him; and sometimes she reckoned she loved him—when he was littler mostly and couldn't all the time bother her. She used to hold him wrapped in a piece of blanket back in Mississippi, and sit on a scrubbed bench in the sun, and sing to him Sandy Land.

Jensie hummed Sandy Land and went right on picking. Because Dee wasn't going to bother her, no sirree.

Dee sat plop onto the ground. "Jackass," he said, and that was enough for a fight, the little brat, but she wasn't going to let him rile her, and she went right on picking. And when they got home, Mama would hear about *that.* Dee begun spinning around and around on his back like a top or a turtle, scattering leaves everywhere.

Jensie rose.

"Are you comin'?" she said.

"No no no no," Dee said. "I'm tired of follerin' after you."

"All right. Stay there then and let the Indians git you," Jensie said. "Burn a coal to your nose." She begun to walk toward the river. In a minute, Dee got up and knocked the leaves from his britches and hung along after. Well, she was sorry she'd scared him with Indians, but he ought not to have crossed her.

But pretty soon, when they were back under the trees, Dee

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was right along with. Now the sunlight fell down onto them again like so many warmish feathers stripped from their shafts by the high, knifing pecan branches. That woman once, just this side of San Antonio, who'd come out from hiding in the woods and seen her loved ones scalped. Happened just before her and Daddy and Mama and Dee drove up. There that woman was, walking around about her yard. Benches and broken dishes. And everywhere, all hung on fences and bushes, was feathers that the Indians had shook from the ticks—the Indians had only wanted the ticks. And this woman not paying no mind at all to her and Daddy and Mama and the rest, but just stumbling around about her yard, trying to pick back her blown bed-feathers. Jensie shivered. She was about to think her ownself a scare. Well, she wasn't going to let *Dee* know it, and then talk her into running home like a fool.

Yes, it had got powerful hot, and she was going to take her own sweet time, and maybe even have her a swim. And then go home.

Thank God they hadn't seen an Indian since they come here.

The sound of the river was cool and the sun full bright onto it. Jensie pushed her way through some redbud and hackberry.

"Now where're you goin'?" Dee said.

"I figured to maybe take me a swim," Jensie said. She almost laughed then. Dee's face had rounded up into a little red fist. He let out a noise from his gullet as if he'd gagged on a cricket. Then he flung himself down, all the time making that cricket noise, and started butting his head onto the ground and kicking around in the hackberry thicket like he was going to dig himself a hole, he was such a baby.

"There's some purty rocks here you can git," Jensie said. "Or you can build yourself some twig-houses and go visitin'," she said. "I'll only be a minute." Dee rolled over onto his back. His eyes were big as a pair of yellow plums. He snapped his head at her like he'd like to bite her. "Whump whump whump," he said. It was awful funny.

Jensie didn't laugh, though. She wasn't going to be mean to him. And now where she stood the sun bore down onto her.

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The hackberrys and redbuds weren't much shade. The sun pressed her back and her neck. It made her hair feel close and sticky. The back of her dress was so dry and cottony, it was about to burn up. And maybe she hadn't really thought to go swimming—it was just to tease this little sissy—but now she made up her mind she'd do it. She didn't know when she'd get another chance. There was chores to do when they got home, inside that stuffy cabin; and then pretty soon it was going to be winter, and she wouldn't get another chance this year at all.

"You stay right here," Jensie said. "I'm only goin' out on that bar there, where that broomwiller is, and don't you look." On account of Dee couldn't go with her. That wouldn't be right. And he didn't like to swim anyway.

"Well, I reckon I seen enough," Dee said, wiping dirt and snot from his nose. "I seen you undressin' a-plenty of times, nights, in the cabin."

Jensie's face turned red. "You better not have!" she said. "You was supposed to be sleepin'."

Dee said, "Weren't nothin' to see no-ways."

Jensie nearly hit him then. She well-nigh did. But instead, she tucked her gourd tight under her arm and turned and pushed out through the bushes and onto the riverbed. People in India walk on stones hot as these. But in a minute Jensie stepped into the water, and it was cool and slippery to her feet. The water swished over her feet. The stones beneath were soft and rounded; their cold reach shot up through her shinbones to a sweet ache, and it was so cool it was like saying a prayer that kept her feet safe as she stepped out onto the rocks of the gravel bar—little round hot puddings of quartz and mealy granite—and walked across them to the broomwillow.

Jensie rested a mite beneath the willow, which wasn't much more than a three-limbed thing leaning downstream from a power of old floods. The sun peeled back the wet from Jensie's ankles. Jensie looked at the river. This here was the Nueces, and a prettier river she never did see. Not that old Sabine river they'd crossed to Texas over. *That* one was worse than a bayou, water thicker than week-old coffee, and the high tangle-rooted mudbanks, and away off on both sides, the salt-grass marsh. Nor the Trinity, nor the Brazos. Nor the Colorado, neither. The

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Colorado had reminded Jensie of nothing so much as an old fat-backed water moccasin winding down-country. They'd crossed all those rivers, yes, and more, but this here was the prettiest river she ever did see. It was open to the sun, clear and trickle-tongued, didn't need to keep no secrets. It was that clear, you could have seen your heart through it. Why, Jensie could see the bottom right from where she sat. And along on both sides, it was a white road, each stone of it scrubbed cleaner than a drinking-gourd by the water and the sun. Road for a king. This here river. Down from the canyon country and far lonesome places. Hemmed and spangled with green. The trees on both sides—mostly pecans, but some live oaks, red oaks, elms—grew way up tall, they were that proud to be here. And the hackberrys and redbuds and broomwillows and box elders grew small, near the river, they were that humble. It was a fearful-strong and gentle king, this here river. Just look on this broomwillow she was sitting under. It leans, but still comes green. And all the green things around about were a fresh bright green, from the hand that fed them. Think of fish: bass and bullheads and drum: what lives this river leads! And nothing better for a body to drink. Cold, sweet, clean as the insides of a stone down your gullet.

Or for to swim in.

Jensie set the gourd against the roots of the willow and hummed Sandy Land. She undid the pin at the knob of her neck and pulled off her dress, over her head. Now she stood in her shift. She hung the dress onto the willow. That old ugly thing, how she'd be glad to be rid of it. It'd been three times dyed in indigo and piss, and was tore under the left armpit, and was a tatter to see. How she craved for that new chambry! She could hardly wait. Because *then* look at her.

She took out her tucking comb. Her hair fell down about her shoulders. She had the prettiest hair. That's why she needed that new dress: to set off that hair. She never seen no other like it. It was pure white. Her mama didn't have hair like that, nor her daddy neither. *His* hair was yellow. But plenty of folks had hair her daddy's color. Jensie'd never seen nobody else, though, that had hair like hers. Everybody always remarked on Jensie's hair, whenever first they seen her. It was so soft and white and shiny, the color of winter stubble or a junco's breast-feathers.

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That hot sun.

Now Jensie stepped into the water. Oh it was delicious. It drenched the hem of her shift. Now she let herself down into it—o it was cold! It was colder than she'd figured, and Jensie let out a squeal. Then it felt better. Jensie turned over in the water. She grabbed hold of the stones on the bottom and kicked and splashed in the water, the kind of harshness that gave way beneath her legs. It was so crisp-cold it numbed the undersides of her arms. It scrubbed away her goosebumps. She let her hair that was the color of water stream downstream. The water lifted her body, tried to coax her downstream. Oh this here river never said a word. It just tickled her ears, made a popping hurt in her head. It twisted and tugged her shift loose about her. It was even a mite pert. When Jensie sat up, facing downstream, it gave a shove to her hips; then the bottom scrambled out from under her and for a minute she was kicking and laughing and lost. But somehow she got back onto her feet.

She stood up. The river in a great drench from off her, and her shift tight as a skin onto her and hurting the nubbins of her breasts. Dee had better not be looking.

The only trouble with this here river, Jensie thought, is that you can see *through* it, but never catch your *wholeself* in it, it's so all the time moving. Like that splinter of a mirror back in the cabin. What was left of a whole one. You could see your eyes, maybe, could see the color of your hair, could grin at it for your teeth's sake, but never see the *all* of you at once, so that you never knew really who you were.

Drippings speckled the stream; and wet trickles down her face, tangles of wet hair to her neck. Jensie tossed her head. The sun swept her face. Her hair flew in threads of bright. That was when she seen the three Mexicans.

She didn't waste no time, but started running through the water. DEE! That river—was slow—as ropes at her thighs. The horse was at her. Jensie turned and fell in the water. She seen the horse's hooves—their undersides—and wide nostrils, eyes, a flail of white wet belly as the horse nearly trampled her. Mexican was off saddle into water with a bust of splash, had a grab of her

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tight against his belly. God what a screech then she let up. But it was half a passel of choke-bubbles, because she was down under the water, chunked down under: wild squirrelly thing for kicks, bone-crackings, sights breaking through her eyes. A flush of stonesuck jugged her chest. Sudden somewhere a high wind creaked. Then her whole flesh snapped.

Jensie was looking at the ground. The ground was moving underneath her. It was the stones of the riverbed. Her hands, flapping loose as broken birdwings, nearly touched them. She was flung across the withers of a horse. She could see the horse's hoofs onto the stones. And her belly felt broken half in two, and her innards pushed nearly into her gullet. She was about to choke; her head was upside-down, heavy-blooded. Water was gagging in her mouth.

Jensie moaned. Suddenly she felt a *slap!* and the sting of it on her bottom. It made her suck in breath.

Men laughed, whoever they were. And that man sitting in the saddle above her—his big knees pressing against her legs and back, binding her—laughed. The horse stopped walking. The man got off the horse and dragged Jensie down onto the riverbed. Jensie lay there a minute. She wondered was she dead, the sky was so white. Then she seen them. Those Mexicans' faces spun around and around above her—sometimes two, sometimes three faces of a kind, and seven grins, and sixteen sets of eyes. Until Jensie pulled herself together. Then her eyes come clear. She seen then that there were just three faces. Three mean ones. A fat, thick, hog-joweled one, the color of a coffeebean, dark as Egypt, yellow-and-red-eyed, filled with grin under a greasy handlebar. And a young one, mean-Mexican-eyed. Then Jensie seen that the third man was an Indian, and that put a worse scare in her. His face was high-cheeked, dry shiny acorn color, and his nostrils wide. He had a scar beneath his left eye. It cut dark and thick-mended across his cheek. But it was his eyes mostly that scared her: straight thread-thin upper lids that gave a slit to his eyes as he watched her—eyes black as night or what ever all it was he was figuring behind them to do to her. Jensie cried out *Daddy!* and tried to crawl away. But one of the men

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caught hold of her leg. Then the fat one sat on top of her, laughing like thunder. He pressed a hand to her nose and mouth. It was a taste of smoke and horse. Jensie squeaked like a rabbit, and then couldn't breathe. And when, in a minute, he got up, Jensie just lay there on the stones, sick to her stomach, crying sort of soft-like.

O how Jensie prayed inside herself that her daddy'd come! She craved to see the face of him. Cried, thinking on him and little Dee and poor Mama. Now a hundred times she thought she heard their voices, calling to her. But it was all inside her head—what she *wished* she heard. Pretty soon it died down to an ache and a whisper. She was alone. Nothing, nothing, nothing between her and whatever.

The two Mexicans talked. Jensie reckoned it was Spanish that come out of those Mexicans' mouths. Queer, slippery noises. It might have been so many stones or sticks rubbed together, for all she could make of it. But she didn't care. She just lay there, shaking in her shift.

The fat Mexican leaned over Jensie and brushed a finger against her cheek. Smoke. Horse smell. He wore a crucifix hanging by a leather thong from his neck. The crucifix criss-crossed Jensie's eyes. The Mexican pulled Jensie's hair. "Güera. Una grulla blanca," he said. This fetched a laugh from the others. The Mexican put a thumb against Jensie's neck. Jensie didn't move a whit. The Mexican chuckled. Then he said something in Spanish. It must have meant "Get up," because when Jensie didn't do it, the Mexican hoisted her by the armpits and shoved her toward the horse. It was a cayote-colored horse, what they call a Spanish stick: one of those scraggly, black-maned, long-whiskered kind of horses. The horse gave a start when Jensie bumped against him. He turned his head to see her. He hadn't but one good and one glass eye. There was such a milky emptiness in that one glass eye.

The cayote horse had a stripe down his back, and another that crossed it at the withers. The fat Mexican touched where the two stripes crossed and then crossed himself and laughed. Jensie couldn't make out what it was he said. But she didn't care. She just leaned against the horse and let her hair hang down and all the sun burn down onto her. Then the fat Mexican

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hoisted her up onto the cayote's withers. There wasn't anything she could do to stop it.

The Mexican boy and the Indian had a Spanish mule and they climbed onto it. The fat Mexican climbed up behind Jensie. He clicked his tongue. The two animals started up the river.

Fast. Faster than Jensie had reckoned these sticks could make it. *Oh Daddy, come save me!* And she thought she heard Dee call her; she tried to slide from the horse. But the Mexican jerked her hair. He said a word in Spanish. For a long while he didn't let loose of her hair; each time he jerked it, it set her eyes to tears. But finally he had to let go: the horse was stumbling in the river. The Mexican pulled at the reins to head it up. That river had got fierce, had begun to take on new ways. It was way upstream now, Jensie could tell that. The river was thinner and crookeder and meaner. It had gone Indian. It had the talk of a wild thing—feathers of spray, hatchet-flashes of reflected light. It cut a wound into the banks, the start of canyons; it sucked pitholes on the downward side of rocks. Only stern, lonely critters could stand to live here: a hookjawed bass. And the brush hung over as if to hide the river's narrowing savagery. Jensie prayed that they would stick to this river and the horses would leave droppings on the rocks and it not come down a rain, so that her daddy could track her.

The horses rested, standing in the water. The Mexicans let them drink. The Indian slid from the mule and pulled off two big double-headed gourds and begun to fill them with water. Jensie was so grieved, she wished she could be sprinkled to nothing on that water. She couldn't think straight nor crooked nor any way except to crave for her mama and Dee and her daddy daddy daddy! away downstream. The fat Mexican touched her leg—it cut the breath right out of her. He grinned. "Toral," he said, pointing to himself, scraping his fingernail against the crucifix. "El Escorpión." He poked his thumb into her leg. Jensie jerked away from it and he laughed. She threw herself against the horse's neck and dug her face into its mane. Her thoughts were dark as that mane.

The Indian flung the gourds across the mule and climbed on

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up. *Don't leave this river!* But the fat Mexican jabbed his heel into the cayote's belly. The horse didn't want to do it—branches swatted its nose and chest—but the Mexican forced it up through the brush.

The horse plundered up an embankment and into an open space.

They didn't stop but a minute. But it was time enough. Jensie could see the whole country. It carved a worse grief in her. The river below, roped by thickets between two slopes, wound way down, and then broke free with a shout of light into the open valley, and then was caught up again between trees. Where she'd swum, where she'd picked pecans, where she'd eaten and worked and spoke a known tongue. That whole valley was a funnel narrowing, forcing her up to this.

The west sun poured its last orange settlings into the valley; the west sides of the riverline and the stands of live oak way off down there burned bright as embers. But the other side was darksome, faraway—that lonesome feeling of evening and goodbye.

Of a sudden Jensie cried out in English *to be let free!* and jumped from the horse. The Mexicans shouted. The fat one spurred his horse to catch her. But Jensie didn't run—she knew that wasn't any use. She only grabbed the fat Mexican's knee and begged to be let free. She cried. She said in English her daddy would pay them anything they wanted. Anything. She swore she wouldn't let on to her daddy a word about them. She swore it. She'd walk back home her ownself and never open her mouth. She swore it.

The Mexican looked down at her, his greasy jacket full of belly, his eyes red-and-yellow beneath his beargrass hat. The crucifix dangled. He said words to her in Spanish. The other two laughed. Then he pulled her back up onto the horse. O never never see her people more! Never hear a sound of English! Lost! Gone barren as those canyon places she was headed for. The colorless country. Dry-grass hills, and clumps of brush. Where nothing is except deer to make a clatter on the rocks, bear to push their fur through cedar, the pad of soft-foot cats. And Indians and wolves and rattlers, and desperate men.

Here on the ridge the wind blew. Jensie shook all through

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herself from it; her whole flesh fretted on her bones. The wind pushed big sobs out of her. The Mexican wrapped a blanket around her. It stunk of his sweat, and of dust and smoke and guns and horse lather. It made her shake the more. Then the horse and mule turned and climbed up toward the canyons.

About dark they come to a canyon. The Indian stoned a mulerabbit at the mouth of it. It was sure surprise to that rabbit. Then they started up the canyon. They went a long way up the canyon, it getting all the time darker and colder, October, and the canyon walls closer. Nothing but rocks—little rocks, fair-to-middling rocks, big slabs of boulders. And here and there, clutches of laurel and scrub cedar. It was a dry canyon. There wasn't a lick of water. The horse and mule must have had eyes for dark, and deer bones in their hocks, because they picked their way easy between the rocks. Never a clatter nor slip—just the regular click of hoofs, creak of crosstrees, slosh in the gourds of water. At last they come to an open space.

It was way past dark. The Mexicans hobbled the mule and the horse. The Mexican boy took the crosstrees off the glass-eyed cayote. The cayote let out a long screech of grief when he did it. Its back was raw and bleeding from the crosstrees. The horse rolled on the ground, twisting and scrubbing its wounds against the rocks. Its cries from the dark of horse-grief, and the upheaval and thump of anguished horseflesh, were awful to hear. Jensie feared the horse had gone loco. But the Mexicans never paid no mind to it. They set about skinning the rabbit and building a fire. After a spell, the horse got back onto his feet. Jensie heard him shaking his flanks and withers. Then he moved close to the mule and begun to snuff in the dark for grass.

The three men hunched next to the fire. Though they didn't have their eyes on Jensie, she could tell that they knew every minute what she was doing. She crouched under a scrub cedar, with that stinking blanket wrapped around her, and it cold now, and it night, and October. She watched the three men. They must have been murderers, she thought. Folks must have looked up

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from their sleep at them, surprised for a minute behind their dying eyes. Those Mexicans must have cut throats, got blood under their thumbnails, took rings from dead women's fingers—even that boy has got fingers long for to choke with. And that Indian—how many scalps had he took? Black hair, brown hair, yellow hair, tow hair.

The Indian leaned over the fire and set the rabbit onto the coals. Jensie could hear the rabbit cramp and sizzle. The Indian was nearly naked, and his legs glistened coppery in the light. Just about all he had on was a blanket that come to his hips, with a hole in the top for his head to poke through. And those two Mexicans weren't dressed in much else either. They each wore wide-brimmed beargrass hats with oily, pointed crowns. The fat Mexican wore a bloody, dark, greasy jacket, open, showing his chest and belly. The Mexican boy had a pair of dirty white belts acrossing his chest, but *he* didn't have a shirt either. Just those two dirty white belts. The fat one was the only one who wore boots. The other two were barefoot. Both of the Mexicans had on blue britches with red stripes down the sides. Jensie reckoned those two Mexicans must have been soldiers once, sent to stir up trouble in Texas. They had plenty of knives and such in their belts to prove it.

The Indian grabbed up the rabbit and tossed it to the fat Mexican, who bit off strips of meat from its half-cooked side and made smacking noises as he chewed them. He handed the carcass to the boy. The boy bit off a chunk and then gave the rabbit back to the Indian. The Indian set the rabbit down on its other side onto the coals; and it hadn't lain there hardly long enough to get warm when he fetched it up and bit into the half-raw flesh. Then he broke the rabbit and passed it three ways. They didn't give Jensie a speck.

After they'd eaten, they passed around a big book that the Indian had kept hung by a thong to the saddle crosstrees, among his gourds. They tore out pages. The Indian passed around some stalks of weed that he'd picked. The Mexicans stripped narrow white leaves from the stalks and rolled the leaves in pages and lit them for a smoke.

Owls hooted from one side of the canyon to the other. Things stirred in the brush. It was an October night and the stars were

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down close. They were awful cold stars. It hurt Jensie's eyes to look at them. She was lost as those stars, and she knew it. And the cold dried her eyes so. She had to close her eyes to shut out those cold stars. She pulled the blanket tight about her, but still the cold come through, and cedar needles pricked her skin.

The mule and the horse shifted in the dark.

Jensie wished she was home, in her cedar-picket cabin. She wished she was in her one-legged bed, between the shucks and quilt, and watching a thousand-legger on the rafter. Would he fall onto her bed? Those things have got a poison crawl and and leave a red track. The greasewick lamplight lit the cabin. But first she was out in the clearing. Her daddy was plowing along behind Ginger, with his wooden mold-board and home-made stocks, turning up the rich, dark bottomland. And her and Dee following after, picking up stones. They had a whole pile full in the southwest corner of the clearing, those they could lift. Enough almost to start a fence with. But it was darker and there was a mourning dove sounding in the corner. They washed their hands and faces, and Mama dried them on her apron before she let them in the door. They put down *thunk* the oaken drawbar and pulled in the latchstring. The little greasewick was sputtering in the gourd, and gave a light to the whole cabin. What wind was that? It was blowing that wick. It come through an open chink in the cabin. It blew onto her face. Jensie pulled her quilt up tight over her. Something was scratching, breathing at that chink.

Jensie's eyes popped open. It was the fat Mexican above her, breathing onto her. His face was dark as night, and the long black hair. Jensie let out a screech that come to nothing in his fist. She twisted; she pushed against the press of him. Toral's mustache dragged, black wing dragging across her face. The cold, silver crucifix stung her throat. A redwinged blackbird courting once. Toral's tongue clicked in his fat cheeks for all the way of a redwinged blackbird. His yellow-red eyes: spots on stiff wings. And the cluck of the bird, the squatty flutter, and then God how he sprung—beak clacking in her lips, fierce chirrups to her neck, needle-toed bird-grips at her breasts. She flung herself sideways. But he pushed her, spread her wide: a give of bird bone, a parting of feathers.

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II

All Jensie craved for was to die. She ached with a grief through every bone of her. She had craved all night for death to come. Two dark men had come to her, biting her neck like foxes. Only the boy had not come, though there had been laughter. And death had not come. Jensie had begged the two men, cried for them to cut her throat for her, and let her grief free. They only cut her with softer knives. Now the sun rose.

Up above the canyon the sky was tall and pale. Down here it was dark—rock and brush shadows. The Mexican boy and the Indian moved like shadows among the rocks and caught the two horses and unhobbled them, and tied hackamores to their lower jaws.

Toral walked over to Jensie. He leaned above her. He held out a handful of dry corn. She hated him. She shut her eyes against him. "Grullita blanca," Toral said. "¿Ahora sí comes, eh?"

Jensie couldn't make out a word of it. And she didn't care. She hated him. She turned her face to the cedar needles. She grabbed a tight hold to the cedar bush. She wasn't ever going to eat. She wasn't ever going anywhere. She was going to hang onto this bush, and stay here, and die here. Those Mexicans would have to cut off her hands first, if they aimed to fetch her any further.

Toral laughed. "¡Bernardino, pronto!" he shouted. "¡Traeme la mula!" "Ah, mi Grullita," he said to Jensie. He put a very sad sound to it. He touched her hair. "Mi corazón. ¿Conoces el agarito, el granjeno?"

Bernardino fetched the mule. The mule was full of a morning orneriness, but he followed Bernardino. There was a horse-hair rope coiled to the mule's tail. Toral took one end of it and tied it to Jensie's wrist so tight it cut the blood off. Toral leaned down to Jensie until his mustache touched her cheek. She dug her face into the needles. "Ay, Grullita, Grullita," he said, "no se tan terco." Then he said, "Aha! ¿Conque la grullita quiere tirar raices con el pico, eh?"

He climbed up onto the mule.

Jensie felt the first tug. She grabbed to the cedar bush with all her might. She bit her teeth so tight it brought tears to her eyes.

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The mule took a step. O God, how she wished she was one of those roots, dug way down, bound tight around a rock. The mule took a step. Her hand begun to slip—there went the fingers! But still she kept hold.

Now she was stretched. "¡Tira! ¡Tira!" the Mexicans shouted. They laughed. "¡Está sumida en el lodo!"

Her head was back. She bit a piece of blue sky. The mule took another step. Strings of anguish pulled in Jensie's neck and shoulders. Then her fingers' hinges slipped; she was torn loose. "Daddy!" Jensie cried. She grabbed to a boulder. She nigh splintered her fingers as the mule took another step.

Now she was holding the rope with both hands. "¡Ahora mira la grullita volar!"

She would never never never never give up, let them drag her to death, but now she was running along behind the mule. The mule walked fast. Sobs of shame and rage broke in Jensie's throat. The rocks were mean to her feet. She bumped against a boulder. Stones and branches tore her feet, a hundred thorny things her shift. Now she tripped into a stumble that made her lean off-step.

She fell. She broke brush with her knees. She couldn't get up. The Mexican boy rode up on his horse. "¡Alto!" he said. "Desátala."

The mule stopped. Jensie lay panting on the ground. *It's so hard to die,* she thought. She wanted to die. She wanted to. But how lock out the everlasting breath? She was trapped by her own self. Pain put up a fence around her. Wouldn't she ever be free? Death. Everywhere, every minute, things come easy to it. Even small critters die. Why had it to be so hard for her? O the blood, it's a long worm that means to keep hold. The heart, it's tied in like a knot; the brain, it keeps on winding, winding.

"¿Qué, Bernardino?" Toral said to the Mexican boy. "¿Le tienes compasión?"

"No," Bernardino said. "Desátala."

Toral laughed. "Míralo," he said, "tiene miedo a la grulla." He and the Indian laughed.

"Yo la voy a desatar," Bernardino said angrily.

Toral and the Indian laughed. "¡No la dejes picar te las manos!" Toral said. Bernardino laughed.

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Bernardino untied the rope from Jensie's wrist and shoved her up onto the mule, behind Toral. They rode up the canyon. Jensie hated them. All these Mexicans—this fat devil in front of her in the saddle, that mean, high-cheeked Indian riding along behind. And that boy too. She wished they were dead. She wished she was dead her ownself. And that's what she was going to do, too: she hadn't eaten since yesterday. And she wouldn't *never* eat. She'd starve herself to death first, days and days, with all her might. Until she dropped dead from off this mule. Or it come a night when those Mexicans would sneak up to do their mean business and find her dead—without a mind to her. Safe and cold.

All morning long the mule and horse climbed through the canyon. The canyon walls rose like mountains on both sides. It was nothing but rocks everywhere, and the canyon sides sometimes a dusty coleche-rock, and sometimes here and there some short dry bunchgrass or a spread of yellow bitterweed. Once they passed a clump of canyon walnut. Once they seen a parch-backed rattler. That was all there was. Except that hot sun. Jensie kept the blanket pulled around her to hold off the sun.

After a long while the canyon sides begun to round out. The sky opened blue. Two specks of hawks pinned rings up under the sun, shedding their thin cries. About noon the horses topped a rise. And this was the queerest country Jensie ever did see.

Toral twisted in his saddle. His belly bulged out from the rest of him, hairs shiny blue on it. "Brasada," he said to Jensie, and pointed his thick finger in a circle. That country went on and on. Nothing kept it in but where the sky held it. It was mostly flat, with here and there a tiresome easy roll to it. There wasn't a thing growing higher than a man's head. Most of what there was wouldn't have come above a body's ankles, hardly. Sandbur and tumblegrass. If anything was green, it was that hard-skinned green against the hammering of the sun.

Toral grinned and leaned toward Jensie, a string of mule-rabbit meat whitening in his teeth. "En esta tierra los hombres son libres," he said. Suddenly he spurred the mule. Jensie almost fell off. *"Huchaa! Huchaa!"* Toral shouted, and a deer

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started up sudden from the brush. Its white flag showed. It jumped over a bush. Its forelegs were up; its neck was stiff, it was that graceful. Toral reined in the mule. He laughed. "¿Ya ves, mi corazón?" he said. "Eso es todo lo que nos puede hacer daño."

They stopped for dinner and to let the horse and mule rest. The sun was awful hot. The horse and mule browsed on mesquite beans. Bernardino pulled a hank of tumblegrass and shook the dirt from it. He poured a mite of water from a gourd into the crown of his hat. Then he dipped the grass into the water and fed the drenched grass to the mule and horse. Those two critters couldn't get enough of that wet grass. Jensie heard them chomping the wet grass. She shut her ears against it. She sat under a mesquite and broke off thorns and tried to pin up the rips in her shift. Her face and legs where the blanket hadn't covered her were red from the sun. It hurt. Her gullet was dry as dust. But she didn't intend to eat. No, not ever. Nor drink, neither. Not a speck would pass her lips.

The horse and mule chomped the wet grass. The Indian—they called him *El Nahautl*—fetched his serape blanket cupped full of hairy-skinned black persimmons from the brush. He hunched down and showed a persimmon to Jensie. He grinned. It made his scar wrinkle. "Chapote," he said. His voice came out a gutteral noise from his gullet. But Jensie wouldn't take the persimmon. She drew her knees up and tried to back away from him. The Nahautl pinched the persimmon between his thumb and forefinger, and the pulp popped out. He sucked it into his mouth. He wiped the black juice from his chin. Yesterday Jensie had swum in water. All that Nueces! The Nahautl showed another persimmon to Jensie. But she wouldn't take it.

Then the Mexicans sat in a huddle near Jensie and smoked and ate parched corn and black persimmons and said Spanish and supped water. She wished they'd quit *supping* that water. They'd sup and talk, sup and talk, and blow wet smoke from between their lips.

Toral handed the gourd of water to Jensie. "Toma," he said. Jensie shook her head. But oh how her gullet ached for water! "Es buena agua," Toral said, and sloshed the water in the gourd. Jensie whispered *No, No, No,* and squeezed her eyes shut. It drew her burnt cheeks tight.

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Toral turned to the others. "No importa," he said. "Pronto va a echar el pico pa' atrás como un pájaro."

"La lagartija vive trescientos días sin agua," the Nahautl said, a gutteral clacking in his gullet.

"Ella no es una lagartija," Bernardino said. The other two laughed. Then Toral said, "Vámonos." They stood up and walked to the horses.

Jensie opened her eyes. The first thing she seen was three fat black persimmons lying on the ground by her wrist.

"¡Andale! ¡Pronto!" Toral called to her from the blue cayote. In a rage, Jensie swatted at the persimmons with her hand. They rolled off through the dust. The dust powdered their black jackets. Then suddenly it felt to Jensie as if those persimmons were rolling through *her*, through her belly all filled with dust. And when one of them split into juice against a stalk of grass, inside her belly all hunger busted loose. But *no,* she *wouldn't eat;* no, no, not ever. And the next thing she knew, she'd pinched up a persimmon and popped it into her mouth.

Devil in the flesh! Jensie hated herself. She wished she would choke on those seeds. But now that juice was a key that turned the whole sky loose. The hurt for water flushed all through her. Yesterday! She'd swum the Nueces! All that water! Gushing and gushing!

Toral pulled Jensie up onto the horse. She was in a dry sweat. They rode a long way. The horse begun to rock. It rocked like a boat in water. Jensie hadn't known she was so *thirsty.* Fishes, they live in water. They breathe water. Moist flakes of fishes, fried. Test the skillet with cornmeal. *No, don't think on that!* Grated green corn, the milk of it. Cow's milk, to wet the hairs at your lip, for you to lick. *No, don't think on that!* O a green-grape pie, plums, grapes, dewberries! Jensie's head swum around and around. To suck marrowbones! Soups and juices! Rice water, hominy water, honey water they give you when you're sick! Her mama held up a spoonful of bone-broth to her lips. Her mama's hands looked so cool and white, and moved as if through water, and made her drink bone-broth. Swaller and swaller! Crush a juicy melon. Water down a batch of poor-doo, wet cornmeal cush—*no, no,* she had to keep *hold!* This was her grief to pass through, her river to cross over before she come to death.

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Next big river I'm bound to cross,
Next big river I'm bound to cross

Folks dancing, drinking cider, cider. Lordy, the sun burned fierce. Lordy, she'd got a desert down her gullet. That persimmon had puckered her mouth dry. Jensie pulled her hair through her teeth. Dry. She couldn't spit free the ends of it. She almost choked. But the Mexicans rode right on. The sun busted down, cut Jensie's head to splinters. Her head in pieces swum around and around. Turkey, rabbit, quail, doves—all made into stews, to sup. To sup water. From a spoon, from a gourd, from a bucket, from a stump. Around and around and around, water squirting everywhere.

It flung her from the horse, onto the ground.

She'd had a fit. Now the Mexicans were trying to make her drink water. She didn't want to drink it. She pushed onto her side and coughed it up. Now she had the dry heaves. Her strength was drenching out of her. But she didn't want any water. She wanted to die. And was that her heart's blood she heard withering in her ear? *Next big river I'm bound to cross.* Yes, there was her mama, wiping her hands and tying on an apron. There was her daddy, putting down his ax a minute. There was little Dee. She loved them. And now their lips begun to move. They were telling her how to do it, how to die and be free. Now her own lips were moving, saying *yes yes yes yes yes.*

But of a sudden her eyes come clear. The sun stabbed through them. She felt her irises tighten like a fist. She squinted. She seen the Mexican boy. He was holding something to her lips. It was wet. It was bitter. But her mouth kept on sucking. Her gullet was saying *yes yes yes.*

She tried to knock that wetness from her lips, but someone was holding her hands. And her mouth kept sucking. Oh, what was the matter with her flesh, that it just plain balked to deliver her, that it reached out on all sides and ate and drank and aimed to live, as if it wasn't her choice?

It's so hard to die.

Bernardino took the chunk of cactus leaf from her mouth. He fed her mashed corn and ashes mixed with water. Jensie cried,

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but her gullet said *yes yes yes*. And that evening the Nahautl stoned two doves. He gave one of them to Jensie. Bernardino set the dove and a gourd of water on the ground, close by Jensie. Bernardino never said a word. Then the Mexicans begun to talk and eat.

The bird was a small bird. The Mexicans had cooked it brown, with specks of burnt all over it. Jensie swung between eating and not eating. Then, when she thought the Mexicans weren't looking, Jensie hunched down and ate the dove. Oh it was tasty! Jensie hid the bones—she didn't want those Mexicans to see that she had eaten it—and drank the water. Then she felt better.

That night the three Mexicans didn't trouble her. Toral tied a rope to her ankle, and then to his wrist. He wrapped himself in the Nahautl's serape, and Bernardino wrapped in his own serape, and the Nahautl just curled up naked near the fire. Then all three went to sleep. Whenever Jensie moved, the rope would wake Toral, and he would look at her. Jensie tried hard not to move. She didn't want Toral to look at her.

She was so awful tired. But she had her a plan. It had to do with rivers—with finding one, and then running away to it, and following the river to wherever it took her. But the sound of rivers and the sound of here got mixed. Jensie heard the noise of cayotes, way off in the brush. Nearer to her, the horse half stumbled, weary. Then a bullbat swung back and forth above Jensie. It was a flick in the night. *Peent. Peent.* It kept Jensie from thinking. But *it* was free. It knew its own way, even through dark. Jensie thought of bullbats flying open-beaked for bugs above a dusky river. Tanagers and redwings flashed through the thickets. *O-ka-leeeee.* Bird calls, everywhere. The sun rose for a minute on her mama's voice, and lit the river. Swallows all over the sky. Jensie climbed her way up a willow, her mama's voice calling her most like birdsong, and swayed there atop that willow, above the river, about to fly free; she felt like she might do it. But then she woke. She'd moved her foot. Toral was looking at her.

Toral turned over and went back to sleep. The bullbat was gone. Jensie lay a long while watching the stars, pretending a hundred times that she was free. But pretty soon her eyes begun wandering among the stars, and scattering her mind every which

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way. She was so awful tired. Before she knew it, she was asleep. With not a dream to it.

The next day.

The four of them rode a long way through the brush. Underneath that sun. And it seemed like they were never getting anywhere. The country went on and on. At midmorning they come across a bear. It was a big black bear that sat up on his haunches and looked at them, like he wondered what business those strangers had here, in *his* country.

"Tira el mecate," Toral said.

El Nahautl slid off the mule. Bernardino undid his lasso and begun to ease the mule through the brush after the bear. All the while, he was shaking out that lasso into a wider loop. The bear just sat there, watching—until Bernardino got too close. "Git away!" Jensie yelled at the bear. Toral pulled Jensie's hair. "¡Quieto!" he hissed. But the bear dropped down onto all fours and begun to lope. *"Huchaaa!"* Bernardino shouted, and chased off after it through the brush. At one place the mule took a corner that you'd have thought would throw Bernardino for certain. Jensie hoped it would. But Bernardino stayed on.

Toral stood in the stirrups. "¡Lázalo! ¡Lázalo!" he shouted, and got so worked up he begun dancing in the stirrups. Around and around went that lasso. Bernardino flung it straight. Then he turned the mule smart about and drew the rope tight. He had that bear onto the end of it.

Bernardino kept the bear moving, off balance. He dragged it up past Jensie and Toral. The bear was howling and clawing, and it would half make it up onto its haunches, and then get a leg jerked out from under. It was in a pure rage. El Nahautl threw another lasso onto the bear so that three of its legs were roped, and snagged the rope to a shinnery oak. The bear couldn't get free. It snapped and snuffed and thumped and twisted. "Let him up!" Jensie yelled. Toral laughed and jumped from the blue cayote. He wrapped his serape around the bear's snout and held it tight. The Indian pressed his knee against the bear's free leg; then he cut the bear's throat.

The Mexicans and El Nahautl drank the blood. They tied the

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carcass across the mule and talked to calm the mule so that he would carry it. The Mexicans put Jensie up onto the cayote and Toral climbed up in front of her. Bernardino and the Nahautl walked behind, leading the mule. They went a long way through that bear's country. Finally they come to a canyon.

Toral climbed down from the blue cayote. He and Bernardino led the mule and the horse down into the canyon. The sun burned down. The horse's back was in a lather. His shoulder-blades jerked in his withers as he worked his way down into the canyon. And Jensie reckoned that if they'd had to climb down the *other* side of the canyon, they wouldn't ever have made it. That side was straight-up as a wall, like a knife had sheared it. The limestone was weathered; it was splotched with brush. There were small caves here and there along it.

But this side of the canyon was steep enough going. The cayote hunched down onto his hocks to make it. He and the mule were in an awful hurry. There must have been water down there, because those two animals were going fast. Their hoofs chopped against the slope, raising a dust. The Mexicans cussed at the horse and mule, but they just couldn't make them hold back. The critters kept scraping their hocks, and sending rocks banging down into the canyon.

Down in the canyon there were three big, yellow-leaved pecans. Then Jensie heard water.

The Mexicans cussed in Spanish against the animals and the brush. Toral got his belly scratched, and started kicking at the brush. He was dripping with sweat. His boot hooked and tripped him to sliding down the canyon side. Bernardino tried to help him back onto his feet, and all Toral gave him was a lick and a cuss for it. Finally they come to the bottom. O it was sweet to see that water, two springs of it squeaking from the rock, spouting one above the other, cold and clear as a piece of magic!

Jensie scrambled from the cayote. "¡Alto!" Toral shouted. He was so peeved and sweaty, he wasn't going to let anyone but himself have the first drink.

Jensie ran to the springs. The water reached out to her. She flung herself at it. She scattered a hundred daddy longlegs that

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were bundled and throbbing under the shelf. She drank and drank. She gagged on it. It was so cold and sweet it hurt; it stung her neckbones; it ached in her chest. Jensie drenched her hair; she drenched her ears and mouth and nose and eyes and whole face. Toral cussed. He tried to drag Jensie back from it. Then what a kick she gave him. Toral let out a yell. *Diablos Americanos!* But Jensie went right on drinking. She couldn't get enough of that water.

And when finally Toral did drag her away from it, it didn't matter. Jensie had drunk her fill. She rolled over onto her back in the leaves and busted out laughing. She was soaked with water. Her belly was tight with water. But she'd won that far.

Toral rubbed his shin where Jensie had kicked him. Bernardino come up to him, grinning, and said something in Spanish. It put Toral into a worse rage. Toral fetched up a pecan branch and shook it and sent Bernardino running behind a tree. You could hear Bernardino laughing behind the tree.

Toral roared like a bull. He hove his stick at the tree. He walked over to Jensie and stood above her. "¿Grulla brava, eh?" he said, angrily. Abruptly he reached down and poked Jensie in the belly. What a hurt that was! Then Toral laughed—a mean dark laughter, dark as his face. He walked on off, leaving pecan trees and the canyon walls and the far sky up there spinning around and around.

Jensie dragged herself to a tree. She lay down on the fallen leaves. She lay there all day, sick, hurting, wishing she was dead. But the Mexicans went on about their work. They didn't pay any mind to her.

That night Toral come to Jensie, easing to her like a fox. He was wild like a fox. And when he was done, he flung the bloody skin of the bear onto her. "Duerme con tu amigo," he said.

III

This here was her stone prison. The canyon walls rose up. Up there was the sky. Time went on overhead. Clouds passed on over, changing into winter. The trees dropped their pecans and then dropped their leaves, and left black branches like a

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ladder to the sky. No use to her. And it hailed once, and once it snowed—as if the roof had fallen in on her prison. The ground was queer and pale as the sky. But the springs never stopped pumping their water. The horse and the mule grew their winter coats. Breath showed like foggy stalks. Bernardino made Jensie some leggings out of the bearskin.

These Mexicans were bandidos. Jensie knew that for sure now. Because up in a cave on that cliffside there was sacks and boxes of stuff. What they'd probably stolen. Hardware and tools and cloth—bolts of flannel, twilled cotton, brown drilling. There was one bolt that was the thinnest, smoothest cloth. It changed its colors from blue to green and back, according to the light, and you could see right through it. It was called *seda*. "Vamos a robar el Camino de Presidio, el Camino de Herrera," Bernardino boasted. "We rob the Presidio Road, Herrara's Road. El Camino del Norte, el Camino del Sur. The North Road, the South Road. They must pay through the nose: por sus narices." Then Bernardino would poke out his chest and strut around in front of Jensie and say, "¡Ay! ¡Somos bandidos muy finos!"

Jensie had begun to understand their lingo. "Someday I will be rico, a rich hombre!" Toral would say. "We will all be ricos. Mucha plata, si. I will wear a high collar (un cuello alto). Mis pantalones, they will be split, for the silver botones. And the chaqueta: silver botones. Si. Si. I will wear many shirts. Mi caballo, he shall have the gold bit and los silver estribos, and the silver saddle also. We will ride up and down las vias de Coahuila. Señoritas, they will say: ¡Míralo, es un hombre rico! I will be alcalde, ha ha ha!" Then he'd rip out another page from *La Jurisprudencia* and roll himself a cigarro, and Bernardino would hustle to fetch him up a coal. Toral would suck big breaths from his cigarro and blow smoke out fancy through his mustache, his fat fingers tapping the butt. His chest shone in the firelight, bright as the facings to a generalísimo's jacket—dorado, un gran uniforme—and the little silver crucifix flashed from its nest on his hairy chest.

He'd lean towards Jensie. "Ah, mi Grullita," he would say, "you will be muy bella, eh? You will wear the long combs and las finas mantillas. You will walk like la Dama Española. You will have lace and muchos rings. Anillos con joyas. We will live

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in Coahuila, in la grande hacienda. ¿Mucho mezcal, mucho aguardiente, sí?"

Then he'd wink. "Certain hombres, in Laredo, in Presidio," he would say, "si, in San Fernando de Bexar—they want my goods; they keep mucha plata para mí." And the fire would fall to chunks, and the cold sneak in, and the Mejicanos hunch down around the coals. Way off, cayotes sounded—those thin critters scraping through the brush, doglike, barking their hunger and lonesomeness against the night. Jensie wasn't any better off than those critters, she knew it. At least *they* were free. And oh, she didn't want to go to Méjico at all. She didn't want rings and laces at all. But the night come on. And the Mejicanos' talk wound down to fearful things.

"¡Diablos Americanos!" they would say. "¡Malditos Tejanos!"

"Muerte para los Tejanos."

"They steal from us, we steal from them."

"It is *justo*."

"They kill Mejicanos, si? We shoot them."

"It is justo."

They would look at Jensie. "Ay, Grullita, do you not grieve for us? In Tejas it is un Americano behind every bush."

"¡Cabrones! The last time, they shot my horse from under me. A fine horse he was. And we brought back nothing—nada!"

Toral would say, "But Dios sees, eh, mi Grullita? We come on you. Si. We say: is that a bird in el agua? Shakes her tail like un pájaro! ¡Ay! ¡Ay! Ha ha ha! She puts a feather through us."

And grin. "Ay, mi Grullita, no be triste. You are worth the horse!" And laugh. Get to laughing something wicked. Get to touching her. And night come on, rustlings in the dark like the wings of birds. And it come another day and another night and another day, day on day.

Grief hung so awful heavy onto Jensie. How was she to live? She'd wake to another day. Winter. Her serape would be crusted with breath. Even the sun was cold. Jensie would stir up the fire and hunch down next to it for hours, trying to warm herself, trying not to think. Sometimes there would be pieces of meat—venison or rabbit or a turkey maybe—and Jensie would eat and

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eat. What else was there to do, that could keep her from thinking? Sometimes she poked around through the cañon. There was a pond below the cliff, that the two springs flowed down to; below the ponds there was nothing but dry rock. Jensie would sit beside the pond, and skate rocks across the ice-crust, plinking away the hours. Or build herself twig-houses. Or dig in the leaves under the trees and fetch up a frozen-husked pecan. She come to know that glass-eyed cayote, and to talk to him. He was a prisoner too. He might have been free once; he might have run great, grassy places, somewhere. But now he knew the meaning of leather.

Jensie would feed the cayote winter grass and the bark of willows. The cayote's breath would blow hot onto Jensie's wrists. And sometimes Jensie would warm her fingers under the cayote's mane, along the blood-filled neck. The horse would look up at her out of his one good eye and Jensie, for all her own sore grief, would feel sad for him. Then the horse would press himself against Jensie, as if he wanted her to know. She knew. She fixed his saddle sores. She rubbed the needles and skin off prickly pear, and put the green pulp to his sores, and the sores begun to close. But just about the time the sores would get well, the bandidos would ride out again (one always stayed behind to keep an eye on Jensie) and that horse would come back all covered with his old suffering. "No importa," Toral would say. "It is his life. Such heridas, they do not hurt after the saddle has warmed them." But the cayote horse would look at Jensie with his good eye, and Jensie knew: the map of Méjico.

And there were other things to do in order to forget, or try to forget. Sometimes Jensie cooked. Sometimes she plucked a turkey or a mess of doves. Sometimes, if the Mejicanos shot a deer or a bear, Jensie would cook some of it, even though Toral always took the best parts for himself. And sometimes Jensie would just plain press her head against the trunk of a pecan, and try not to think.

It hurt to think.

Sometimes, for whole hours, Jensie would stay in one of the caves where the bandidos had stashed the things they'd stolen. The floor in the cave was a yellow dust. The ceiling was black from when the bandidos had burned the mud-daubers out. Or maybe it was Indians who'd burned their fires here, turning

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their venison and chipping their flints for arrowheads and talking in their Lipan tongue. There had been Indian deaths here once. Bernardino had told her. A fever had come down, killing babies mostly; there were Lipano babies buried all over this cañon—their small red bones. Not so long ago. "Lipano, he does not love this cañon."

But Jensie would put her mind to other things. She played games with hinges and augers; she pieced herself together a brown, cotton drilling dress, picking the edges for thread and forcing it through with a catclaw needle. And she loved to run her fingers across the bolt of *seda,* it was so soft. It sent a ripple up her fingers. She'd think on other folks, other places. She'd wrap that blue seda around her and pretend the wildest things, things she'd heard tell of: white-skinned ladies under hung glass lights. Then of a sudden, her own hands would seem brown and ugly across that cloth, almost like a Mejicano's. Jensie would just ease down to the dust and cry. Yes. Yes. If it weren't for her grulla hair, and her blue eyes, she'd *be* Mejicano! And once Bernardino climbed up and seen her crying that way. He took her hair in his hands and wiped her eyes with it. But she turned her face away.

Jensie knew what Bernardino was about. He was just like the others. What were her tears to Bernardino? Her griefs weren't any more to him than the griefs of that cayote horse.

Bernardino said a word in Spanish. Jensie shut her ears against it. Bernardino made a sad face. Jensie shut her eyes to it.

Bernardino touched her. It froze her feelings cold. Because Jensie had learned a thing: the way women and women and women can come to hate. She pressed the back of her head against the rock, hard, trying to make it hurt enough to overcome his touch. The cold, burnt rock blacked her hair. Then Bernardino let go.

When Jensie opened her eyes, he was staring at her. For a long while Bernardino stared and stared, and he never said a word. Then he stood up and walked out.

For days and days after that, Bernardino never said a word. He'd look away whenever he saw her. As if he knew something.

Jensie bided her time, waiting for the chance to get away.

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If she could only steal that blue cayote and set his nose toward the Nueces. Or if only somebody would come, her own people, hunters maybe, and take her away. But this cañon was the dead center of nowhere, God-forsaken. Jensie prayed and prayed, but nobody come. Just snow, once. And hail. And wind all the time shuffling past her, overhead. But one time, she had her chance.

It was toward dark of a warm day—the first day of spring, Jensie reckoned. It seemed to Jensie as if everything was trying to hold out this one last night, and when morning come it would bust out green. It put the fiercest grief in her. There were new birds in the cañon: scrub jays, and a pair of black-backed finches. These had woke her this morning. They would wake her again tomorrow, even more cruel.

The two finches sung across to each other, as Jensie walked in the cañon. *Tewyee tewyer* sung the two finches, hurting Jensie with their song. And beside Jensie the broomwillows were about to poke their buds loose. Down by her ankles the rush grass had lost its crispness and was streaked green in the stems.

Around the edge of the pond, the last of winter's ice.

Jensie sat for a spell beside the pond. She poked black, icy leaves from the mush with a stick. Of a sudden she had the queerest feeling—as if, hung through the air, not coming from anybody, a hand might any minute brush her neckbones, rise spread-fingered through her hair. As if a wind of a voice was about to touch her. And those finches weren't singing any more, either. Jensie dropped the stick. She looked up. Way up there, at the top of the cañon, was an Indian. He was looking down at Jensie.

Toral was under the pecans. He called low to Jensie, "Get under the trees." When she got there Bernardino whispered, "Lipano."

The Nahautl was up at the top of the cañon right now, talking to the Indian. Pretty soon he come back down. He spoke in Nahautl. Jensie couldn't understand any of it. But the Mexicans began to hustle. Bernardino hackamored the mule and the horse. He saddled the blue cayote. El Nahautl threw corn and dry venison into a sack and filled gourds with water. Toral fetched ropes and the two guns.

"¡Grullita!" Toral said. "Go up into the cave—vete a la cueva."

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Then he pointed to the top of the canyon. "In that direction it is la región perdida." He pointed down the canyon. "That way it is el campo de los Lipanos. Indios. Do not go. ¡Vete a la cueva! We will be back." Then he began puffing up the canyon-side, leading the cayote along behind him. El Nahautl and Bernardino followed after. The Indian wasn't anywhere to be seen.

Jensie couldn't hardly believe it. It was too quiet. Any minute now a tree ought to split and start talking Mejicano. No, all she could hear was her own one breath, and the blood pumping in her ears. *Tewyee tewyer* sung the finches. O she had to get herself away from here!

Jensie tied some corn in a kerchief. She filled a gourd with water. She took a long drink from one of the springs. She spread out her bearskin and rolled the corn and watergourd in it and tied the bundle with a thong. She listened. Only that toward-dark sky, overhead. One bird flew to another tree. There was the splash of the two springs. That was all the sound. Jensie started up the canyon side in a fever, the way a moth makes for light. *Tewyer!* went the finches, as if to nip her on her way. Jensie grabbed rocks and branches to pull herself up. Sometimes the rocks slipped from under her; she skinned her knees and her shins. Her blood got so loud it hurt. At last she come to the top.

Jensie ran. She was like a sparrow that's been put in a box; when the top is let up, it breaks out in a rush and tumble and flutter. Jensie tripped and bumped her knees and snagged her dress on the brush. But she got up, scratched and panting, and ran some more. She didn't feel any hurt but the hurt to be free. It was like a blind thing in her, beating its wings. Finally Jensie couldn't run any farther—she was lost in a cedar thicket. Her arms and shoulders were so weak she hadn't the strength to push through. There was a cottony taste of dry blood in her mouth.

Jensie fell to the ground. Dry cedar needles sprinkled down about her. She knelt on her hands and knees and arched her back and gaped and heaved. When the spell was over, Jensie knelt there, trembling like a newborn colt, all weak and sick-smelling. Then a terrible weight begun to grow onto her. It pushed her down to the ground. Her fingers tried to flick against

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the weight. Her eyelids tried to flick. But it wouldn't let up. It kept getting bigger and bigger.

Jensie sank down under it.

When she come to, the night was one dark bruise above her. Jensie opened her eyes. Her eyes were filled with the dark. Not a star, even, to put sight into them. Then Jensie heard a low *snuff*. Something was scraping the ground close beside her. Jensie bolted upright. She heard the furry turn of some secret critter and the swish of it outward through the cedar. She sat up in a hurry. She stood up. She was still newborn-coltish in her knees. What was it that had snuck so close to her, bent on doing what? Jensie listened. She heard it moving around, out there somewhere in the dark—the soft, circling sound of some furry critter. And other noises: small peeps, scratchings, twig-shiftings, the midnight tumble of beetles (was it?), or the fretty hush of birds. Somewhere a clunk of antlers (was it?) against branches. Jensie began to walk. She walked right on, through the full dark. For a minute every noise stopped except that soft circling. Then Jensie come out of the cedar. She walked. She hoped she was headed westward, toward the Nueces, where her mama and her daddy and Dee were right now. Sleeping. Alongside the Nueces. Were they hoping still? Were they dreaming right now of her? Now the cayotes begun to bark. First two or three, way off, in a low drag-out tune. Then suddenly, from right behind the next bush, it seemed like, come sharp yaps that scared the liver and lights out of Jensie. Then, from farther off, the sound of a whole pack of cayotes in a grief-muzzled chorus, their voices pitched just a mite higher than the last time. It seemed like not one cayote could get high enough but that another couldn't get higher. And then suddenly they stopped, listening for her. And then suddenly let loose one tall moan that seemed it would brush the clouds from the sky and set the stars free. When that didn't happen, the cayotes got bitter; they started rasping their songs one against the other. Then suddenly they stopped, listening for her. Then suddenly they let loose again. And that fur-footed thing was circling and circling Jensie. What was she to do? Her heart beat every which way, like a bat trying to sound where that circling was. And it was awful dark. Jensie felt her way with her feet. She stretched her hands out in front of her,

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against the brush. She kept on walking. She seen that if she'd stare straight blind ahead she could make out things from the edges of her eyes. But roots snaked at her ankles. Stones and splinter-sharp sticks cut her feet. Plenty of times she fell. Her face and arms and legs were scratched; her dress was torn. Her hair was tangled with stickers and cedar needles. Now a wind begun to blow. Jensie knew the signs of it, right away. It was the kind of a wind that has squeaked through such miles of stony country, distance has shaped it cold. The scrubbed shanks of dead trees are the name of it. The brush begun to creak, and then *bang* it on her. The wind was fierce cold. It threshed her hair back; it gripped and thinned her dress; it stung her with whiplash branches. Jensie squeezed her eyes shut. She leaned through the wind to a scrub oak. She pressed against the scrub oak and begun to untie the bearskin. Above Jensie the oak leaves shrilled. From deep inside the oak tree come the strain of oak muscles. Then the hail beat down like fury. It strummed and stoned Jensie and stung her skull; it broke oak branches. Jensie hollered. The wind hollered. The hail banged down. Jensie covered her head with the bearskin, but then the hail stoned her ankles. She covered her ankles and the hail stoned her head. And then almost before the hailstorm had begun, it was done. The hail stopped. The clouds passed eastward. They let loose a full moon low in the west. Hail covered the ground—miles and miles of it. The moonlight stretched across everything, cold as a wet knife, and struck jewels among the hail. Eastward, against a sliding cloud, a queer rainbow showed: it hadn't any *colors* to it: its arc was in different shades like the changes of madness. And all around was the bright empty air and the pebbled floors of ice. Jensie shivered, and not just from the cold. Stars were flung like limedust through the sky. They hadn't any word. And the moon never said a word. Just cold stones in the sky. And the cold lost silent country was everywhere, everywhere, and Jensie's flesh was alone, single, in the middle of all this country, under all those stars and stars and stars. What was the use of a tongue now? Stones talk better. Or the use of a color of eyes, or notions of flesh, or any sweet breath across a body's mouth?—dead bones talk better. Knucklebones. Moonbones. The everlasting bones. White. Things caught from moon-side. Al-

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bino eyes. O this was a fearsome craziness! O both ends of that moonbow touched, and that was from never to never; was from never to never, and Jensie kept on walking, aching from the hail and the lostness. Alone. Above the faraway ghostly earth. It was most like a dream. She would lift up a foot, set down a foot. Her feet lifted so slow, set down so forever. And when catclaw and agarita scratched her, Jensie never felt it. She sat down and dragged up her stony-cold foot and pulled an inch-long cactus needle from it. It didn't even hurt. She tore strips of cloth from her dress and tried to wrap her foot. But she couldn't get her fingers to work, they were that cold. She tried to stand up, but she was too stiff. She had to crawl on her hands and knees across the hailstones until she come to a scrub oak. Then she pulled herself up. She hobbled from scrub oak to scrub oak, hoping westward. Somewhere along the way she'd lost her bearskin, with all the corn and water in it. But now Jensie didn't care. And then her blood began to grow pale. Or was it the sky up there?

When the sun showed, it was in the wrong place for her.

Jensie walked and walked. The sun began to take a strong hold. The hail-broken brushcountry steamed. The hailstones shrank. Jensie walked and walked. She come to a cañon.

Three black-branched pecan trees down there. And smoke threads winding upward from a fire. *Tewyew tewyer* sung the finches.

All that country. One long mean circle. And now here she was . . .

Oh God!

Jensie eased to the ground. She was too worn out to cry, even. She pressed her face into the dirt, among some bunchgrass. The tips of the bunchgrass pricked at her eyes, but didn't let loose a tear. Only let loose a low moan out of her.

> *Here we go round the mulberry bush,*
> *the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush,*
> *here we go round the . . .*

Oh God!

Once she'd worn a scrubbed-clean dress and danced that, ages

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and ages back. She could hear herself singing. And went around and around until she fell to the dirt. And heard herself laughing.

Jensie opened her eyes. She stared at the dirt. She heard the Mexicans laughing in the canyon.

What had this country to do with her? There weren't a mind to cedar. The grass hadn't any fingers to care for her.

She heard the Mexicans talking in the canyon. She reached out with both her hands and grabbed to weedstalks and stones. But these hadn't any comfort.

Well, it was those Mexicans or that country, one.

She took a deep breath. She pulled herself up. She was worn out, *plumb wore out.* But she pulled her innards back together. She listened to the Mexicans.

Humanos!

Then she began to climb down into the canyon.

IV

The mule and the horse stood by the pond. The mule still wore the crosstrees the Mexicans had put on him the night before. The crosstrees had slipped around and under, and now they dangled from his belly—loose leather and cinches. When Jensie come down into the cañon, the mule didn't even look up, he was that woeful with those crosstrees troubling his belly. His head hung close to the water. His ears drooped in their misery-signals. The blue cayote looked up at Jensie, then lowered his head again until his whiskered chin just tipped the water, dripping small drops.

Jensie knelt by the pond. She ran her arms into the water up to her elbows. Her scratches stung. She drank some water. She almost fell into the water, she was so tuckered. She splashed water onto her face and ran her wet fingers through her hair to rouse herself. The horse and mule stood stock still, their chins dribbling. Jensie pushed up onto her feet, through the weight and ache of herself, and turned toward the pecans, where the smoke was rising. The afternoon sun shone down on the naked trees and threw their black shadows to the ground, to the winter-blackened leaves. The Nahautl stood at the edge of the trees,

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watching Jensie. He had a pile of sticks in his arms. Jensie walked up to the trees and past el Nahautl to the fire, where smoke unwound from orange flux to spindle upward between trees—first a blue, then a pale, then the empty sky up there. Bernardino sat on the other side of the smoke, watching Jensie. He was wrapped in his serape. His face was dirty, pebbled with sweat. His eyes shone red from the smoke.

Jensie said, "¿Has comido?"

Bernardino didn't say anything; he only looked a long while at her. El Nahautl dropped his sticks beside the fire. *Tewyee tewyer* sang the finches. That was the only word.

Well, Jensie wasn't going to waste any time. She went right to work. She was nigh dying of hunger. She got her coals in shape. She mixed cornmeal and bearfat and water in a gourd. Then she spread her coals and sprinkled them with cornmeal and shaped her mix into cakes and put them on the coals. She sprinkled them with cornmeal and covered them with coals. While they were fixing, she rinsed out the gourd at the spring and filled it with water. Then she propped the gourd near the fire and fished stones from the coals to drop into the water. In no time at all the water was boiling. Jensie plucked crisp dewberry leaves from canes on the cañon-side; she stuffed them into the gourd and let them steep. She raked the hoecakes from the ashes and laid them out on a rock, black-crusted, smoking hot.

She sat down to eat.

"Hssst!" Bernardino said angrily. "*You do not eat!* I do not let you eat. It is no justo."

"I'm hungry," Jensie said in English.

"¡No es justo!" Bernardino shouted. Then he said, "Toral is dead."

Bernardino jumped to his feet. "¡Diablos Americanos!" he said. "They *kill* him. El Escorpión esta muerto. They shoot him in the face."

"¡Diablos Americanos!" he said.

The smoke from the fire wrapped his legs; it wound around his serape and darkened his face. Bernardino didn't take notice of the smoke at all. His eyes shone red through the smoke.

Bernardino spread his malediciones. "¡Cabrones! ¡Malditos, malditos Tejanos! Gringos. Perros—the white-faced dogs!

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"This is not their country," he shouted. "Nosotros dominamos el Camino del Norte, el Camino del Sur. Pertenece a nosotros los Mejicanos, no a los Tejanos.

"El Lipano, he leads us to them. Lipano, he hates el gringo also. Si, they have come to find us. But we fight. There are six of those gringos."

My daddy! Jensie thought. "Bernardino!" she said. *"Did one of them have yellow hair?"*

"No," Bernardino said. "But we kill two. It is una pelea grande —a great battle. But the others get away."

He said, "We go to rob the two dead ones, for they do not need it. Toral, he is bending over un dead Tejano, muerto—the dead one shoots him in the face."

"Ihuan chicome tlaminiloti," el Nahautl said quietly, and fetched up a hoecake. "¡Maldito seas!" Bernardino shouted, "you do not give a damn." El Nahautl looked at him. He shrugged his shoulders. He turned and walked to the trees.

"¡Muerte, muerte, a los malditos Tejanos!" Bernardino shouted after him. He shook his fist. The leather-thonged crucifix swung from it. "¡Ojalá!" he shouted.

His voice hitched of a sudden low, like it was being jerked from him. "¡Heridas en mi lado abiertas por mis pecados!" he whispered. He shook all over, and the serape fell from his shoulders.

Bernardino was streaked with blood. His shoulder was black with blood. Proud flesh, like a mushroom, puffed from his shoulder. The black crust broke open. Bright blood dabbled through the pulpish fat, treble red branches among the dried black branches. Heridas en mi lado abiertas por mis pecados. *Wounds in my side opened for my sins.*

"¡Ay! ¡Ay!"

Bernardino slid to the ground. His body twitched. He made uncommon noises in his mouth.

His blood drenched the leaves. Jensie ran to him. She tore strips from her dress and pressed the wadded rags against the wound. Now she noticed the Nahautl standing in front of her. She looked up at him. The Nahautl just stood there, looking at her. Jensie stood up. "Llévalo a la cueva," she said to the Nahautl. But she didn't reckon he'd do it. Then, for a wonder, the Nahautl

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bent down and lifted Bernardino. He began to carry Bernardino up to the cave. Jensie crammed a hoecake into her mouth. She took up the gourd of hot tea and followed after them. When she was up in the cave she said to el Nahautl, "Trae unas hojas." The Nahautl fetched in some leaves. He piled them in a corner. Jensie had him put Bernardino on the leaves.

Jensie tore some flannel from a bolt. There was a basket of salt stashed in the cave; Jennie thinned some in the hot tea and washed Bernardino's chest and belly. The wound had quit bleeding. Jensie cleaned around the wound and tore off new strips of flannel and packed it against the wound and wrapped Bernardino's shoulder. She had to lift Bernardino up to wrap his shoulder; when it was done it had worn her out, she was that tuckered. She sat back against the cave wall, panting.

She saw el Nahautl squatting on his heels at the cave entrance, watching her. But Jensie hadn't the strength to be scared. "*Vete,*" she said. "Vete, vete; go away, go away." Then she eased down onto the leaves, and slept.

Bernardino was touching her face. Jensie sat bolt upright. She rubbed the crust of sleep from her eyes.

Evening had come on, sinking its darkness into the cañon. The Nahautl wasn't anywhere to be seen. Outside, the three pecans poked upward like long black fingers through the dusk. Somewhere a dove was spelling night.

Bernardino lay onto the leaves and looked up at her. Jensie could hardly see his face in the half light. After a while he spoke.

He said, "Why do you come back?"

"I hadn't any place to go," Jensie said, in Spanish.

"Y yo también. And I also," he said.

"I walked, but I come to here," she said. "I was so awful tired."

"It is a big country," Bernardino said. He stared up at the ceiling. The edges of his eyes were white in the dark. He said, "Tengo quince años—I am fifteen years old. When I am twelve, I am walking in my town of Costeños. Soldados step from a doorway. They do not ask my name. They are the men of General Manuel Mier y Teran. They take me to their campamento,

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outside Costeños. Now I am soldado, they say."

He was quiet for a while. Then he said, "It is a cruel life, Grullita. We walk to Matamoros. Muchos soldados there. Toral is there. We walk the long march, a travéz del Rio Grande, hacia Tejas. Mucho mesquite, mucho granjeno; many miles of dust. There is not much water. There is nothing to eat. But Toral teaches me. He puts his hand in the leaves of chapote, the black persimmon, his hand in the leaves of the plum, ciruela, and we eat. He throws a stone under huijilla; there, there is a rabbit. He plucks the dove like a grape from branches. Toral teaches me.

"Sometimes we come to a town. The people do not want us. But Toral teaches me. The chicken, he walks on two feet. Dios put the chicken there so that we may eat. We borrow the chicken, and Matrona does not miss it. And Dios breathed life into the pig: when we eat the pig, we eat God's breath. I learn to borrow the pig. How to choose the horse: praise the tall, but saddle the small. One time we choose two horses, and in the night we ride away. El Nahautl is with us.

"It is very funny. They are the General's horses. But we are not caught. Ellos no nos alcanzaron.

"Ah, Grullita, comprendes? We are *free*. We shoot the deer. We take from the Americanos what we need.

"¡Ay! Toral teaches me! And he could ride the horse. He was at one with the horse. It was the truth of the horse in his body."

Now in the greying light Bernardino's eyes were closed, thin-lidded, twitching as if in pain. They made his face seem so easy hurt. And his length seemed such a long and sunken thing.

"Toral is dead," Bernardino said at last. "El fue como un padre para mí." He was like a father to me.

Suddenly he cried out into the dark, "Toral! Toral! Where have you led me?" He tried to rise from the leaves, but he fell back down. He held out his hands. "Look at my hands," he said. "My hands have been as two hawks, feathered against pity. I have worn my heart wild like the cat's. The snake has crawled behind my eyes and eaten my sight.

"¡Ay! But he has shaken down the leaves. And I have seen my death."

Bernardino lay back. After a long while he said, "¿Cómo te llamas? What is your name?"

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"Jensie," Jensie said.

"Yensi?" Bernardino said. "But your hair is very bright. The wings of the white crane. Grullita. The little white crane. It is strange you have such blanca hair."

"I don't care, I don't care!" Jensie said in English. "I wish my hair was black."

"¿Blanca?" Bernardino said.

"I wish I was dead!" Jensie said.

"Yo no comprendo," Bernardino said.

"¡No quiero vivir!" Jensie said.

She heard Bernardino rising in the dark—the shift of the leaves under him, the sense of him leaning toward her in the dark. She was afraid. She pressed against the wall. She felt his hand touch her neck. She felt his hand move along her neck. It woke her again into that grief and rage.

"*Why do you always touch me?*" she cried.

His fingers in the dark, touching her eyes.

"I hate you!" she cried.

She began to beat him. She beat sharp breaths out of him in the dark. But somehow his hand caught her wrist, and she would have opened her mouth to screech but of a sudden her body gave in. All the strength shook out of her. Bernardino pulled her to him and she moaned.

He held her. He begun to rock back and forth in the dark. All the animal fastness was gone out of him.

"I am wild, wild," Bernardino cried. "Ay, mi Grullita, heart of the white crane, breathe onto me. Cover my eyes. Breathe onto me. Think I am the wild horse, mesteño, so gentle me."

He said, "Al Rio Nueces. I will take you to your home."

Springtime opened fine. Everything unlocking everywhere. Like this joy in her. The uncramping of pecans to bust a bud, tongue-thrusts, until the high pecan branches were flecked with pale leaves. And the poking to feather-tendrils of broomwillows, and the bright anguish of the bean-flowered redbud to be free. Grasses to break their crease. Dayflower, spiderwort, unfoldings of new world.

And up above, the streaked blue air.

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Soon Jensie herself would be free. Bernardino had said it. What she had never counted on. She could cry sometimes for thinking on it, for thinking to be free, for touching her mama's face, for saying *Mama do you know me? This is Jensie.*

Or sing. Sing out like a bird almost. But the birds sang for her. The cañon began to fill with birds, day in, day out, coming up from Mexico. *Ke-whirr,* the ashthroated flycatcher. Rock-wren's pipings. Whitebreasted nuthatch's *why? why? why? Tee-yew teeyer* sang the finches, their breasts of yellow putting a color to the world, stoking a fever in Jensie until she sometimes moaned for thinking on it. Then she would stop whatever work she was at—tending fire or whatever—and walk under the pecans, beneath bird and leaf. Or run out onto the new grass, gasping from the hope in her.

And a scrub jay splotch blue the brush above her, *check check check check ke-wesh.*

In the broomwillows, redwinged blackbirds courting. Chittering. Stiffening their red-patch wings.

There were times too when Jensie feared Bernardino would change his mind. Then she would work harder than ever and try not to think on it. She took care of Bernardino. She dug the roots of *tuna* and washed them and mashed them on a rock. She put the mash to Bernardino's shoulder. The wound healed. Jensie baked Bernardino hoecakes, and sopas of venison. She made Bernardino take lots of rest so he'd get well. She hunted out the shoots of sour dock and careless weed and pursley beside the pond. She cooked them for Bernardino. She cooked him doves and rabbits and squirrels, and sometimes a turkey that the Nahautl had called down with the hollow of a bone. Then Bernardino would eat, and talk to her in Spanish. And Jensie would talk.

She would talk to him in Spanish, about her home, about how things would be, there, right now. Her daddy would be plowing the bottoms—it was that time of year. And Dee probably following along after, with a stick to set the corn. Jensie's chore, she told him, would have been to put the corn in, and dirt it over. And she would tell him how her mama would be airing the cabin now, it being spring and all. Her mama would scrub the benches with ash-soap and set them out in the springtime sun

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to dry. But that would have been *her* chore, Jensie said, if she would have been home, and and and and, and she reckoned that that was what her mama and her daddy and little Dee were doing right this minute.

Because Bernardino was somebody to talk to. It felt good to talk. He listened to her. And he'd been stolen himself, from his folks when he was little, and so he knew how it was.

Bernardino wasn't much older than her. His self hadn't come yet to be a man's. He was thin-chested like a bird. He was beanpoled. He was even more beanpole-ish than usual, now that he was sick. But if his arms and shoulders were smooth and olive, his face was already telling old. His face already had wrinkles on it, around the sad almond eyes. His eyes were always sad. Even if he smiled, it was a sad smile.

Once Jensie asked Bernardino why he was so awful sad?

Bernardino looked at her. He brushed his hair—blue wing of the crow, *el cuervo*—back from his eyes. He said, "It does not matter."

But after a while he said, "You will go home, si, mi Grullita? Your people will care for you. Si, you will become the tall *Dama*. Your hair will shine in the light. It is what you wish. But I am of the dark. And already I am nothing. Nada."

"Onetime I think, soon I will be rico. Soon I will have money to carry to Costeños. But there is no money. Nada. And if soldados see me, I will be shot. I cannot go to Costeños. And if Americano sees me, I will be shot. Nada! I am as nothing, and my death will show it."

Bernardino stared at his hands. He talked low, like he was ashamed almost. He said, "I think of the tall men, Español, who come before us, who do brave wonders in the world and wear the silver coraza and the silver helmet, so that their walking shines. Conquistadores. Then it is good to be soldado. Si.

"My mother, she is Spanish.

"And also," he said, "I am triste, sad, because I think . . ." but then he brushed back his black hair and wouldn't say it.

But she was going home. Soon. Bernardino had said it! And sometimes Jensie liked to be by herself to think on that, to sit on a rock in the springtime sun, maybe, and piece together the new yellow dress that she was sewing to wear to meet her folks.

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She had dyed the cotton flannel yellow with a dye made from the roots of agarita, the way Bernardino had showed her. Now she was sewing her dress, seeing herself in it over and over, meeting her folks. Or sometimes she would just sit in the new grass, beside the pond, and think on going home. She liked to listen to the blue cayote as he chomped the new grass: the horse would bite the grass and chew it crosswise in his teeth; every so often he would blow out breath to clear the grass from his nostrils. Or listen to him drinking water: he'd swallow slow; then, when he was full-up, he'd lip the top of the water and let the drops tumble, peaceable. Then suddenly Jensie would be in a hassle to put the crosstrees on him and light out across country. She'd proceed to light out across country a hundred times in her head. In no time at all, she would be looking down onto the breaks of the Nueces. Way off down in the valley would be the river, where she'd swum, where she'd gone one day with Dee to hunt pecans. Jensie could might'near reach down with her hand and touch the river. No, reach down a hand and touch her daddy's cedar-picket cabin and pop the roof off and say "Look who's here!" No, she'd *fly* down there, if she was going to be that fancy, and sit in the top of a chinquapin tree, and sing out for all the world like a bird flown up from Mexico to mention spring, and sing, sing, sing until her folks had to come out. "Listen to that there *bird!*" they'd say. And then she'd come running out from behind the tree.

Once while Jensie was lying in the grass strung out on such conjurings, a finch come shuttling above her in his silly dips, the way a finch does, all sprinkled with twirps. And Jensie didn't know why it tickled her so, but it did. She started laughing. She rolled over onto her belly and laughed into the grass.

Too much laughing. Why did her belly hurt so?

So she just lay there, her hair making a nest in the grass, possessing her face. It ached in the small of her back too. But pretty soon the sun, pouring down, drenched away the ache and stroked her whole girl's-length, until her insides bloomed and she was floating in the green-smell and warmth.

That same evening, after Jensie had fed the blue cayote handfuls of new grass, and was walking up from the pond to the pecans, the Nahautl stepped out in front of her. His thin-slit

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eyes. His crooked knit of scar. "¿Qué quiere?" Jensie said. What do you want? But the Nahautl did a queer thing. He reached out his hand and touched Jensie's belly. Jensie turned and ran to the spring.

The Nahautl didn't try to follow her. He stood where he was, watching through his thin-slit eyes. And Jensie couldn't help herself—she busted out laughing again. For no good reason. What reason could she have? She was afraid of the Nahautl. And still she laughed.

He stood watching her. She was laughing and laughing. The laughing hurt in her belly. She began to tremble. She stuck her hand in the water to stop that laughing.

The water was cruel cold. It had come from a thousand miles deep in the dark of nowhere, and it stopped her laughter. The Nahautl walked over to the fire and sat down beside it, with his back to Jensie.

Nits and midges hung about Jensie's face. They made her sneeze like pepper. They made her crazy, wanting to laugh. A daddy longlegs bobbed upon his stilts. A scrub jay bounced into a redbud above her and shook down fierce bean-flowers to the rock, stirring the madness of a laugh in Jensie. What was the matter with her? God, if she didn't grab hold to something she was going to unravel into wild. Too much! Too rich! Too much hope, that's what it was. Ever since Bernardino had said he would fetch her home. Now she was sick to her stomach from it.

Jensie leaned against the wet rock. The shelf in front of her was hung with black-spined ferns. She grabbed a tight hold and heaved the clabbered laughter up.

Bernardino was standing behind her. "What is the matter?" he said.

"*I want to go home,*" she said.

That night Jensie had a troubled dream. It wasn't about the Nahautl. She dreamed she was home, si, and it was dark inside the cabin. The greasewick lamp had filled the whole cabin with smoke. And everybody was turned away from Jensie, busy at one chore or another, so that she couldn't see their faces.

But Jensie stood in the middle, in her dream, in her yellow

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dress, waiting for her folks to talk to her. They had their backs all to her. Finally her daddy stood up. Her mama looked over at him. Her mama was crying (if that was her face). But her daddy's back was still to Jensie. Then her daddy spoke. But he spoke in Mejicano.

Jensie woke right up. "Daddy, Daddy, háblame," she heard herself say.

Jensie lay there wide awake. She couldn't get Mejicano out of her head. It was all her thought. This rock, coleche; that moon, la luna; those trees, los nogales, palo blanco, el cedro, los olmos; this grass, that flower: sacaguista, huajillo, violeta; these hands, las manos.

Jensie looked at Bernardino, on the far side of the cave. He was asleep. En la luz de la luna—in the light of the moon—his face was white.

Jensie closed her eyes. Bernardino's face come clear, bleached by moonlight. Jensie opened her eyes and tried to think up Dee's face. But little Dee hid his face behind a bush.

¡Ay! ¡Ay! Jensie thought. *Se fueron de mí—they are gone from me.*

And the worst was, in the days that followed, Jensie couldn't for the life of her call up her folks' faces. Or if sometimes she did, it was like faces in a splintered mirror.

¡Se fueron de mí!

Because now all her thought was Español. Oh, she grieved against it. But especially when she wasn't thinking, she was thinking Español. And this changed the look of everything. At the sight of a tree, the words los olmos! or el nogal! pushed through her head. And hojas!—the stir of new green along branches, where el aire los perturbó.

Jensie's folks thinned away like ghosts. Jensie tried to call them back. But their foreheads were all splintered, their eyes all empty, their motions forced and pale. Even la casa, cedar-picketed, with the latch to the door of it, began to fail, and a far woman to set her scrubbed benches distantly in front of it. Ay! They had darkened her—Toral, el Nahautl, Bernardino. They had put a space between. And *he* had darkened her, El Furioso Sol, from way up there where he hung in his stretch of light. And time had darkened her tongue, until now it was talking

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Español. Jensie couldn't help it. Only agua, cold and wet, tasted real in her gullet. Only los olmos, el nogal, el palo blanco to her eyes. Only the darkness of el Nahautl obscuro; only Bernardino's face, oliva, almendra-eyed, triste, triste, real.

Even Jensie's hands talked Español.

Hasta las manos de Jensi hablaban Español.

But one day Bernardino said to her, "Mira el cielo—look up at the sky. It is going to rain. Thus. Dios is great and wise. He sees this country becoming dry and lifeless, though it is spring, primavera. He sees that el cañon looks like humps of crust with hot trees to it. He sees the deer in the brush, and they are so poor that their ribs stick out. Dios sees all this, and the sight grieves him. When Dios is grieved the brightness of the sun becomes dull. Thus. The winds cease to move. All things become brittle and as though they were covered with glass. The grass becomes still and deep-colored. Dios is growing sad. All trees and cañons look dull. They seem silent and heavy, waiting the will of Dios. Soon Dios weeps, millones y millones of tears that fall over llano and cañon, over buck and doe—tears that change the leaf and fill los hoyos, the holes-in-the-rock. That is how it is going to rain.

"Tomorrow, Grullita," Bernardino said, "it will be el tiempo-de-los-hoyos. The time-of-the-rock-waterholes. Then we shall go."

Following the big rain and the clear night, it was a heavy dew —the dead leaves black with dew and the green leaves tipping under the weight of it. And now morning had pushed up a thick fog from leaf-loam and inner kindlings of new grass.

This is the morning, this is the morning, esta es la mañana, si. Jensie walked towards the springs. The fog peppered her forehead and beaded her pale hair. Big drops sprinkled from the trees. Jensie could hardly breathe, she was so roused up. *This is the morning.* She hadn't slept all night. Each posture had been a new awakeness; the cruel ache of waiting had filled her skull. Now the prickling wet made her head ache the more. And the worst of it was, she felt sick to her stomach again, like the past

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morning and the morning before that. She walked through the fog with her mouth open, gulping breaths, the cool wet stinging her lips and creasing down her throat. That stopped the sickness some.

The brush showered when Jensie touched it. She couldn't see two feet in front of her. The grass where she stepped was heavy with dew; dew was caught in the collars of turkeyfoot; it was balanced in twists of tumblegrass and on the blades of grama grass and switchgrass; it wet the strings of panic grass. The dew doused Jensie's ankles and freighted the yellow hem of her dress.

For a minute the fog shifted: drenched pecan trunks, floating wet-black branches, a dripping shelf of hung limestone. Jensie seen the two springs. Then the fog closed back. But she come to the two springs easy, by way of habit.

Jensie knelt on the wet rock below the springs. The rock soaked her knees through her dress. She shivered from it. *This is the morning. This is the whole day, opening.* She breathed deep the wet morning, and it went all through her.

She listened. She heard the noise of the mule and the horse down by the pond, and the cussing of Bernardino and El Nahautl as they put on the crosstrees. Then the fog muffled the noises.

The fog peppered Jensie wet. The springs splashed down their water and sprinkled her. In the run, a square-stemmed mint bent, toppling its wet onto her wrist. A bird fluffed awake in the redbud up above and shook down wet buds and water onto her. But she didn't care. She craved the wet. She was awake. She was breathing. Only this puny sickness somehow down inside her—she couldn't figure why. But she wasn't going to let any sickness keep her back. She was going home. Esta es la mañana, si.

Jensie drank water to stifle the sickness. That felt better.

She brushed her teeth with a root of hackberry. She rinsed her face in the run, and wiped her face dry on her homemade dress. She pulled her wet hair back and tied it with a piece of flannel.

Now she was set.

She stood. She looked down at her dress. The yellow suited her. But her hands and arms seemed so dark. What would her folks

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think if she was to bust out into Mejicano? Like she was thinking in right now.

Her lips tasted smoky.

The fog spread to bright: the sun trying to poke down through. The brightness hurt Jensie's eyes. The cayote whinnied down by the pond. "¡Grullita, vámonos!" Bernardino called. The fog thickened back to gray. That sun just can't make up his mind today, Jensie reckoned. ¡Ay! ¡Esta es la mañana! she thought, and a shiver ran through her. Bernardino called again from down by the pond, "Vámonos." "Ya voy," Jensie whispered, and ran through the wet cañon to the pond.

The mule and the cayote stood by the pond. Their tails were long wet switches that brushed the grass. Their coarse winter hair, that they'd just begun to shed, was matted with wet. Streams of wet veined their barrel bellies; cowlicks of wet plastered their quarters. Their forelegs were plastered deer-thin with the wet. The crosstrees were on their backs. These were hung with strings of watergourds and serapes and sacks of smoked venison and such. A Mexican rifle, *mosquete,* was tied to each crosstree. Rags and skins had been flung across the crosstree frames to make saddles. The animals' reins dangled from their jaws into the dew-filled grass, which they chomped lazily, like they figured they were never going anywhere but just right here, where there was plenty of grass and water.

Bernardino, on the far side of the blue cayote, punched his knee *kathump* into the horse's bloated belly. The cayote flung up his head, farted, snorted, ran a few steps, but Bernardino was right along beside. The cayote's belly shrank to half the size. Before that horse could think, Bernardino had jerked the chincha tight.

For a minute the fog thinned back to bright. "It will be a hot day," Bernardino said. The Nahautl, who was tying some gourds onto the mule's crosstree, grunted.

Bernardino looked up. He seen Jensie. "Buenos días," he said. He leaned against the wet flank of the cayote and watched Jensie. His face was a soft olive color from the wet. His hair was bedraggled as a rained-on black minorca's feathers. Jensie laughed to see it.

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"¡Mírala!" Bernardino said, and he grinned. He walked his fingers stiff-legged like a bird across the cayote's rump. "Look!" he said. "She walks through water like the long-necked crane. Look. Amarillo. She wears the yellow legs of the crane."

"This is my yellow dress," Jensie said.

"*Escucha,* listen to her sing!" Bernardino said. "Her beak is full of minnows." He laughed. He put his foot in the estribo and lit up onto the blue cayote. The cayote, peevish, shifted under the weight.

"Siempre me estás embromando," Jensie said, pouting. Why did Bernardino always have to tease her?

Bernardino, grinning, rode over to Jensie. He looked down from the horse at her. A darkness crossed his face. "Grullita," he said, "where will you fly to?" But then he laughed, and snatched up the tail-end of her hair.

"Aya!" he said, "she drags her tail through water, long feather of white."

Then he wasn't smiling any more.

He looked at her.

"Si," he said. "Si. It is la grullita. Azul. The closeness of the water is in your eyes."

He was very solemn. He said, "Conquistadores. They led their prisoners on chains of gold. Or silver. So it is said, and I believe it."

He let loose of her hair.

"Give me your hand," he said. "Put your foot in el estribo. Watch out for the rifle, mosquete." He helped her up behind him, onto the blue cayote's rump.

But el Nahautl had hold of the cayote's hackamore. He looked at Bernardino and Jensie. "¿Nos vamos?—we go?" he said. His voice was dark and quiet.

"Si," Bernardino said.

"Where are we going?" the Nahautl said.

"Al Rio Nueces," Bernardino said.

"No," el Nahautl said quietly. "Vamos a *Méjico.*"

"Al Rio Nueces," Bernardino said. "And you shall have the mule."

"¡Maldito seas! What do I care for the mule? And do you think the woman is only for you?" el Nahautl said. He said it quietly.

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"We will take her to Méjico."

"We go now," Bernardino said. He tried to prod the cayote forward. But el Nahautl held the hackamore.

"Give me the jáquima," Bernardino said.

"We go to Méjico," the Nahautl said.

"You will ride the mule."

"Si," said the Nahautl. "And will you keep the woman for yourself?" ¿Y vas a guardar la mujer para ti?

"¡Vete!" Bernardino said.

The Nahautl pushed the cayote's jaw down against its neck. The horse blew breath, and begun to step back. The Nahautl was grinning all the while.

"You are not Toral," he said to Bernardino. He looked at Jensie. "And a caged bird flies where it must."

Bernardino jabbed his heels into the blue cayote. The horse bolted forward, jerking el Nahautl along with. Jensie nearly fell. Now the Nahautl wasn't grinning any more. He had a knife in his fist. Jensie seen it.

"You are not Toral," el Nahautl hissed. "¡No! ¡Tú no eres Toral!"

Bernardino prodded the cayote again, slapping a hand against its neck. With a grunt the horse swung against el Nahautl. Bernardino kicked el Nahautl's wrist. The knife flew to the ground.

"¡Abájate!" Bernardino said. Jensie slid from the horse's rump.

The horse nearly trampled her. She scrambled out from under and ran to a rock. She climbed up onto it. Now el Nahautl had hold of Bernardino's waist. Bernardino bent over, trying to twist free from the Indian's grip. "I will kill you," el Nahautl said. The blue cayote shied sideways. The two men fell to the ground.

The cayote snorted, trotted off a little way, started chomping grass. El Nahautl and Bernardino churned in the grass, silent in the grass and fog. Leaves of wet grass speckled their bodies. The twist of the wet olive body, the twist of the wet brown body. Their knees and their elbows smashed the grass.

The cayote chomped the grass. Every once in a while he'd look up at those two men fighting. Then he'd go back to chomping the grass. Bernardino and El Nahautl fought in the grass. There wasn't a word to it. And what could Jensie do but fear to watch? The men wrestled, chest to chest, fierce grass-printed bodies

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holding and then slipping and then holding again, in a tangle of slick arms and legs and knots of backs printed with grass. Flash of olive skin against wet brown skin. Belly-smack and backward smash of grass.

Eyes closed, teeth grinning, the Mexican and the Indian fought in the grass. The blue cayote chomped the grass. The Mexican and the Indian kicked, bent, twisted, thumped bodies, rolled toward the blue cayote. The cayote snorted and shied back. The Mexican and the Indian grunted, bit skin to let loose a slicker wet, red, hit and choked and grunted. Now from the coil of their work their breaths broke fast.

The Nahautl was on top—or almost on top. His arm was across Bernardino's neck, choking. Bernardino's head was back, his eyes sprung wide, his teeth biting for breath. The two men began to wind down slow. Slow trembling press of the Nahautl against Bernardino; slow dragging up of Bernardino's knees, between himself and the Indian, like some last contraction of a dying thing. Only Bernardino's fingers, on the Nahautl's back, seemed alive, dancing, clawing, like they were in another world.

Bernardino gave a kick. He knocked the Nahautl back onto the grass. Bernardino begun to roll toward the blue cayote. The Nahautl found the knife in the grass. He turned to Bernardino. He was panting, grinning. The blue cayote shied away, but Bernardino caught hold of his tail. The Nahautl crawled toward Bernardino. Bernardino pulled himself up to the blue cayote. "¡Vámonos!" Jensie shouted, and kicked at the air. Bernardino slapped at the cayote, twisted its tail. It snorted, white-eyed. Then it ran toward the pond, gourds banging at its sides, and splashed across the water, dragging Bernardino along with.

The Nahautl climbed to his feet. He saw the mule standing beside a boulder, humping and scraping its gear against the rock. He ran to it and reached for the rifle.

GARRUMP! the mule honked. It scooted up the cañon to the trees, honking and banging its gear. Jensie hadn't known what she'd done until she'd done it, but she'd fetched up a stone and hove it at the mule, hitting it smack-dab. Now the mule was up there under the trees, honking its indignation from its guts.

The Nahautl looked at Jensie. And Jensie didn't know why, but she wasn't scared of him at all. There was a fierce rush of triumph all through her like some maverick sap.

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The Nahautl didn't waste any time. He headed for Bernardino. He ran through the water, knife held high swosh swosh swosh the pond collapsed where he stepped, and water-spatter.

On the far side of the pond, on a rock shelf slanting into the water, Bernardino had pulled himself up between the horse and the cañon wall.

The fog began to pale.

The horse was skittish. Its withers shook. It kept edging along the rock.

Bernardino didn't pay any mind to el Nahautl at all. He was trying to twist the mosquete that was tied to the crosstree, and to aim it. He talked to the blue cayote, trying to gentle it. He had got the mosquete half across the horse's neck.

The Nahautl was halfway across the pond.

Wet smoke broke from the blue cayote's withers. The explosion rattled through the cañon.

The horse skidded from the shelf, flinging Bernardino against the rock.

The Nahautl paused. One leg was straight out, lifted half in running; it made him twist in the water. Now he was aimed around to Jensie. Such a look of surprise onto his face. Then he sat down slow into the water, a trickle of red curling from his lips. Suddenly the fog turned monstrous bright. It hurt, it was so bright. Then the sun broke clear. Wetness blazing everywhere.

The Nahautl blazing in the water. He tried to rise, drizzling brightest blood and water. "Motzla mitztocaroa!" he screeched. It was like the screech of a hawk. It sprinkled blood from him. But he eased back down into the water.

The Nahautl sat in the water. The blood that the air and sun made bright streamed from his chest to darken the red cloud circling him in the water. It seemed to Jensie that he was laughing. But he wasn't laughing. He was coughing. Rings of red water widened from him. The Nahautl settled to one side, coughing. Slowly, as if the air was too much weight onto it, he lifted his arm and wiped it across his nose and mouth. It come away red.

Ay! Was he grinning a red grin at her? Jensie covered her face. But "Motzla mitztocaroa," she heard the Nahautl say again—only this time quiet.

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Jensie looked up. The Nahautl was fumbling in the water and pushing back up and fumbling. He slumped slowly sideways into the water. He turned. Then both hands were on the bottom of the pond, fumbling. The Nahautl's back shone bright, streaming its red in the sun. Now his face was barely above the water. The water wanted him. It was easy kin to his blood; now his body too was slipping into it. And if the Nahautl seen the water, still he let himself down into it, easing down into it, and then down under. Where he must have settled. Bubbles pricked atop the water. The water quieted. The sun shone. An awful silence was everywhere, but for the two springs singing, and the noise of the blue cayote: back in the grass again, chomping. In the middle of the pond the water darkened like a thunderhead. Everywhere else it was stalks of light, sprung from water-seeds through the whole canyon, or was it Jensie's eyes that made her see it that way? The fierce wet was on leaves and rocks and grass and watergourds and the horse's flanks and leather: bright.

Jensie ran around the pond to Bernardino. He was lying on the rock shelf. "Bernardino! ¿Estás bien?—are you all right?" she cried. "Are you hurt?" "No mucho," he said. Jensie cried, she was so glad he was safe. She well nigh kissed him, she was so glad. She well nigh did. She held him to her. Bernardino said, "We will go now, Grullita." Jensie helped him to his feet. He said, "I do not wish to look at the water."

But he *was* hurt. His shoulder had opened. Jensie fixed him up. Then they caught the mule and the horse and led them up the canyon side, through the scrub brush and scrub oak and cactus and steaming rock. They climbed from moist hot bush to moist hot bush, pulling the two animals up to the broad country and the sun-packed sky.

They were panting when they got to the top. Bernardino especially. They rested. Then they were glad to ride the mule and the horse.

V

En Español.

In Spanish: Ese sol tan alto, esta eterna tierra. . . .

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That tall sun, this forever country. Country of the thousand thorns. You can't walk anywhere but what you. Agarita, catclaw, mesquite, Spanish bayonet, tasajillo, prickly pear. That whole section-full over there. I'd hate to have to ride through look at all those yellow cactus flowers! They only open when the sun.

Where the shrike pins his lizards to a thorn tree. But we haven't heard or seen a bird all morning. Is it the air too heavy? How ever could they *sing?* Only rattlers live here. Scorpions under the rock of noon. They sting themselves when it gets too hot. Too hot. Wet. Wet fog this morning—don't think on that then you won't be thirsty. I can't *breathe.* Night is when things breathe around here. Yes, but water, that whole pond full, red—*o don't think on that!* The scarlet flower of the barrel cactus: cacto viznaya.

You've drunk too much water already. Bernardino says. Can't hardly see, my eyes are so full of sweat. It drips. I'm wet all over but I don't taste salty.

Well, look at him up there on his blue cayote. His ankles wet with sweat. Beargrass hat, and that old cotton serape that his mother onetime made him. The cotton glares. Bernardino, here I am talking to you only you don't know it. Bernardino, Bernardino. Hunched above your blue cayote like it was the heft of the whole sun. Does he hurt? He hasn't said a word but once all morning. Is it still morning? No, that sun's O! that hurt my eyes! straight up there. Look at this white flower in my eyes now it's blue o sunflower now it's made my whole dark purple.

Feels like we've been riding *years.* Too hot to think, even. The ground down there. Hot. Limestone; chalky flint. How can a thing *grow?* Black sunspot down there in my eyes: skims the ground like a bird.

Listen to this mule's hoofs. Flint-splinters. That's how come this morning he limped. Poor mule. But he doesn't seem lame now. Poor mule, you've got a lather. Beaks, stingers, thorns, claws, prickers. This cruel country.

Last night I dreamt.

O Bernardino! Never *see* you more?

Whatever will you do when you go to Méjico? Whatever will you do when you go to Méjico?

He is good to me.

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O this new thorn in me! What I hadn't known yesterday.

I don't want.

Ahhh, my arms, my neck, they're about to melt from the sun.

In the middle of this forever country. Yes, and somewhere under all this sun—but under trees somewhere—it's my folks, it's the River Nueces. But here. Bernardino. Him and me. No, my folks don't know the sun, like . . . Bernardino, si, cover me with the shadow of your hand.

Because this tall sun.

But then, by late afternoon, they rode into another country. For a stretch anyway, though it was still the tall sun. But here for a space the grass grew. It felt queer to push out of the scrub and to ride into the open grass, but that's how it was. Jensie couldn't figure it. And flowers? She'd never seen so many flowers for to tell the spring. The sun kept a full hold, and spelled out what things might grow: colors of the sun and sky: blue windflowers and blue sage and yellow niggerheads and sandflax and a prickly poppy and a blackfoot daisy whose eye is like the sun. Only here and there a stand of scrub oak or mesquite to hold a sunshade to the grass.

The mule's hoofs swished slow through the flowers and grass. Tumblegrass. Curly mesquite. Look! A doe, with her fawn all speckle-spotted, ran through the grass. Then stood there watching them. But this forever country.

A little way farther the blue cayote quit. Not to eat grass. It was the hot sun. And the mule quit too, as if the sun had yoked him to that same hot tongue. The horse and mule, now that they were stopped, drooped their heads and dripped lather and barely breathed. The heat wrapped itself around them.

The ache of not moving, of not stirring somehow this hot smother in her, was more than Jensie could bear. "Bernardino," she yelled. But it seemed like the air would hardly part. It seemed like Jensie could hardly push a word through it, it was that thick and hot and dead.

Bernardino didn't say anything. He just sat there, slouched above the blue cayote.

Jensie gave the mule a kick. She gave it another kick, and

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she gave it another one, too. Finally the mule heaved his weight across the grass, through the thick air.

Jensie said, "Bernardino? What is the matter?"

Bernardino said, "I can go no farther."

"Ay, Bernardino, let me help you!" Jensie said. Bernardino was about to fall from his horse.

Jensie slid to the ground and ran to him. Bernardino swayed above the blue cayote. He blinked back the sweat and looked down at Jensie. His face was nearly white, like a squeezed fist. He was gripping the crosstree so tight with his fists that the white knucklebones showed. Dark bruises shone all through his face, where the Nahautl had walloped him—the swollen flesh backed and packed with the inner, hurt blood.

Jensie reached up to help him. "We should have stayed in the canyon," she said.

Bernardino straightened. "We could not have," he said. "But it does not matter."

"Si," Jensie said. She understood what he meant: the Nahautl—o don't think on that!

"He follows me," Bernardino said. "He waits for me. And sometimes I think: that is his eye up there."

"Don't think on that! Don't think on that!" Jensie said.

Bernardino pointed. Way off yonder there was a low rise and a stand of mesquites. "But there are los hoyos," Bernardino said. He slouched forward. Jensie caught him. He grabbed her hand. "I am not well," he said. His voice was queer and dry. "Forgive me," he said. "It is not the sun. It is the many blows. But we have come to los hoyos."

Jensie led the cayote to the mule. She climbed back onto the mule. The mule drooped with the heat. Jensie looked at the rise. The heat stood up from the grass like a wall. Way off yonder, the stand of mesquites shook in the heat.

Jensie's eyes ached with the brightness.

She beat the mule with the cayote's reins. The hot air burned her naked, lifted arm. She beat the mule and he took a step and Jensie beat him and forced him through the heat, to plod through the grass and suffocations. She covered her arm again with her serape. She tugged the cayote along behind. It

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was a slow, poke-along hitch. But when they neared the rise the horse and mule grew eager.

They come to the rise. This was a monstrous slab of limestone as flat as a table. It stood hardly two hands high above the ground. All around the edge of it, it was burnt black, as if there'd been fires. The dozen or so mesquites—new greenish-yellow leaved, and sprung now with their creamy spikes of flowers, up like candles—ringed the rock and gave it some shade. All around the rock, the grass was cropped close: there were plenty of deer-droppings. A scattering of yellow huisache daisies grew under the mesquites. These flowers hadn't been cropped. The deer at night had trampled them, though. The bitter, pinched smell of the huisache daisies put a sharpness to the air.

Bernardino said, "These are los hoyos."

Then Jensie seen. There was water in the rock: a honeycomb of potholes, hoyos, all different sizes, rounded and smooth-cupped. Years and years and the scarcest fingers of rain in this country had coaxed them from the rock. And last night's rain had filled them partly full again. In the potholes, old mesquite leaves and pods of beans had turned the new water to coffee color.

"Please," Bernardino said. "Help me down from the horse." Jensie slid from the mule. Her kneebones and shinbones and anklebones ached from the shape of the mule. It hurt to walk. But she was glad to stretch.

The mule poked his nose toward the potholes, snuffing. Bernardino said, "No, do not let him drink." Jensie tied the two animals close-nosed to mesquites. Then she helped Bernardino.

Bernardino eased to the ground. He grunted. He sat under a mesquite. He lay his head back against the trunk, his eyes closed, the sweat puddling in his eyes, his neck lined with dirt and sweat. Jensie wished she could help him. Bernardino made a noise. Jensie knelt beside him.

"You want some water?" she said.

Bernardino shook his head. He said, "Do not be angry, Grullita. One day, two days, I will be well. Then I will take you to your home." Jensie brushed the sweat from his eyes with the edge of her serape and wiped his face.

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"I wasn't thinking on that," she said.

Bernardino flinched beneath her touch.

"I am sorry, Bernardino," Jensie said.

"It hurts a little," he said. He opened his eyes. "You are not angry that we must stop and rest here?" he said.

"No, Bernardino."

Bernardino tried to smile. Jensie looked at him. He was only just a boy. He said, "Sometimes when I see you, I think: she is like the doe. Si. She means no harm, and eats the berries of agarita and what grass Dios gives, and permits the winter and the sun and the hunter's knife. It is in your eyes," he said.

He touched her. She stood up. Bernardino said, "It is painful to be the hunter, do you not see? You have crept to the deer. You must lie down by the roots of cedar until your heart becomes still. Dios watches. You point the mosquete. You shoot. And do you possess the deer, or does the deer possess you?"

The blue cayote whinnied. Bernardino said, "Grullita, lead them to the other side of el hoyo. Do not give them water until their necks are dry. Ay! It is odioso to be useless."

Jensie unloaded the mule and the horse. It was a chore. Bernardino tried to help her, but she wouldn't let him. There were black swatches of wet on the animals' backs where the crosstrees had been. Their sores had begun to open, too.

The cayote whinnied. The mule honked. They were ornery for water. Jensie led them to the other side of los hoyos. She hitched each of them to a mesquite. The mule and horse snuffed for water, and honked and whinnied. Jensie couldn't let them have any, though, because they'd get the founders for sure.

Jensie pulled up grass. She curried the mule's and horse's backs with the grass and put dust on their sores. This eased them some. She curried the foam and caked salt from their flanks and necks and bellies. She felt sorry for them. Their heads were hangdogged in a puzzlement of crave and waiting, the way a horse does. But pretty soon Jensie would fetch them some water.

There wasn't any breeze. The mesquites were still. The water was hot in the hoyos. On the far side of los hoyos, Bernardino had tied two corners of a serape to mesquites, trying to make a lean-to. Now he was setting rocks all along the back edge of it.

Bernardino looked across at Jensie. He tried to smile. "Come

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under the shade," he said. "We will hide here like two lizards." Those are the deer's eyes, Jensie thought. That brown hurt.

Jensie watched Bernardino's hands move, thin and silent, deer-like, as they set down the rocks. Even when you walk, she thought, it is with the deer's thinness.

Bernardino. Here I am talking to you, only you don't know it.

She walked back on around the rock. Bernardino had crawled under the shade of the serape. But it didn't look cool there either.

Jensie said, "Bernardino? Why is the rock all black?"

Bernardino said, "Look up in the mesquite—the six-branched one who shades the great hoyo. Do you not see it?"

"Si," Jensi said. She hadn't noticed it before. Up in the highest branch of that big mesquite there were deer antlers, tied together with beargrass. It looked for all the world like the bony, bleached nest of some other-country bird. Old turkey feathers were woven among the points.

"It is the sign of Lipano," Bernardino said. "This is his hoya de agua."

Jensie looked in every direction. No, she didn't see any . . . But still . . .

Bernardino laughed. "Do not fear, Grullita," he said.

"Come rest in the shade, and I will tell you," he said.

Jensie crawled under the serape lean-to. She lay down. Under the serape, it was just as hot as outside. It was stifling.

"Lie still, Grullita," Bernardino said. "Soon you will be rested. And tonight a breeze will blow. That is how it is in this country."

Or a Lipano come on us, Jensie thought. Was it going to be a full moon tonight? Because that was when the Indians did their prowling.

Bernardino said, "This is the spring, primavera, si? The Lipano is not with us. In the fall, otoño, when the grass has let down its seed and deer are strong from so much grass, then the Lipano comes. He comes from el norte. He takes what deer he wishes for his purpose, for there are many deer. Then he burns the grass. That is why the rock is black. Fire kills the thorny ones—cedar, agarita, granjeno—and makes the earth rich. And in the spring, as now, while the Lipano is en el norte, a few rains come. Then there is water in los hoyos, and much new grass,

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and the deer increase; and Dios speaks his pleasure in the many flowers."

Well, she was glad to hear it, Jensie said. Bernardino laughed. Then for a long while they lay there, not saying a word, and the sun going on west. Jensie felt somewhat better. She tried to figure the weave in the serape above them. Bernardino's madre had woven that. Once Bernardino had told Jensie how he used to love to watch his mother at this work, when he was little, and how his mother would sit so straight, and wear combs in her hair, and tell him stories, when he was little. Stories of the fox, the eagle, the ringtail, the snake. Nowadays, did his madre think of him?

Jensie said, "Bernardino?"

"Si."

"Soon I will be home."

"Si."

"Where will you go when I am home, Bernardino?"

After a while Bernardino said, "I do not know, amiga. Shall I go to Méjico?" They were quiet a while longer, thinking. Then Bernardino said, "This is the country of death. But have you noticed? There are no flies here."

Of a sudden Bernardino said, "Motzla mitzlocaroa."

—The Nahautl lifting from the water. "Ay! Do not think on that!" Jensie said.

Bernardino said, "He speaks in Nahautl."

"Yo no comprendo," Jensie said.

"It is best that you do not comprehend," Bernardino said, "for we do not wish to talk of it." But later he said, "*Motzla mitzlocaroa.* He means to say: *tomorrow it will fall to me.*" Then Bernardino said, "Si. I have seen my death."

Jensie sat up. She looked at him. "Why do you always think on that?" she said.

Bernardino's eyes were closed; his mouth was open wide, bruises swelling the edge of it. He swallowed. Si, he was just a boy, no older in the world than her, as afraid of things as her, and scared like any other. "You do not understand," Bernardino said. "It waits for me. It is a Great One standing in the air. Its hand is over me, like this serape. I see the death of a bird and that is its word to me. And Toral. And el Nahautl, si. Ay! Ay!"

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"Bernardino!"

"I am nothing. Nada."

"Shhh, Bernardino, no one will hurt us here," Jensie said. And after a little while Bernardino said *Si,* and was quiet.

Toward dark, but while it was still the last of light, Jensie watered the mule and the horse. They drank deep and slow. Then Jensie let them out onto the prairie and put them in hobbles.

West, a low shelf of burning light, clouds, the last, like an orange-hot anvil; east, the first stars showing, and night rising like water to douse the anvil. The night was halfway across the sky.

Darkness everywhere. Jensie watched. And in her that feeling of waiting, like she used to get sometimes, for instance, when it would be still midday and yet dark and the darkness set to rain, and she would be waiting for the rain. Now the dark begun to spread across the faraway prairie. The long, low, last of light. Jensie seen deer watching from the prairie, ghost-like, standing in wonder to see her at their watering place.

Back under the lean-to, Jensie and Bernardino drank water and ate strips of dried venison that the smoke had made salty. They mayn't build a fire, Bernardino said. They could rest here and drink the water of los hoyos, "which the mesquites guard and the stone makes sweet," but they mayn't build a fire. "That is for Lipano only," Bernardino said.

And now it was night and the full dark. So many stars. The sky seems closer in Texas. What are all those small noises? Yes, it's—Jensie thought of the deer standing around on the prairie, waiting.

Soon a breeze come across the plateau. It stirred the mesquites and shook the serape. Jensie and Bernardino slept.

Jensie opened her eyes. It was morning. The deer were gone. The quiet, the white and first hush, was upon the grass. No birds sang in these mesquites.

The morning lay in Jensie's belly like a round stone. That

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sickness again. Wouldn't she ever be rid of it? Wouldn't she ever be her ownself again? And *distance! distance! distance!* her heart, waking, cried—*and loneliness.* And if last night the sky had seemed that close, this morning the distance stretched everywhere. Only Bernardino here beside her, breathing.

Tall, empty, the sky, she thought. Not the speck of a bird across it. The empty spaces.

She turned to Bernardino. Si, he was awake. He had been awake before her. He had been watching her in her sleep.

The bruises on his face were going down some.

"Do they hurt, Bernardino?" Jensie said.

"It is much better," he said.

"The swelling has gone down some," Jensie said.

Bernardino grinned. He said, "I can see out of my eyes now."

Jensie spread her serape on the ground, between them. She fetched venison and a gourd of water and set them out. "Gracias, Señorita," Bernardino said. "Buenos días," he said. Then they ate the venison and drank the water.

Jensie chewed on the salty meat. "I wish we had a green-grape pie," she said. "I'm tired of smoky meat."

"I do not know el grin grep pie," Bernardino said.

"You take a lot of grapes and a lot of honey and mash it and make yourself a green-grape pie, and then you have yourself a green-grape pie."

"That would be good," Bernardino said.

"I'm sure hungry for it," Jensie said. "Well," she said, "here's you a green-grape pie." She handed Bernardino a chunk of venison. They laughed and chewed the meat. But now the lean-to began to fill with light. It was the sun. Jensie and Bernardino rolled over onto their bellies to watch it rise.

Rey.

The King of Everything. *Nos maravillamos de ti. We marvel at you.* Wherever do you spend the night?

And now here he come, El Furioso Sol, lifting up from Alabama or Mississippi. Had lit rivers. Had woke eyes. Had got the roosters crowing in Mississippi. But this here was his own country.

They watched the sun rise.

The pink sky. The paleness of newer light. The ground all black, still clutching the nighttime in its roots—such dark dis-

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tances! Then the peep of fierce purple cap, and slow bulging up, like hottest blood. Jensie sucked in her breath.

Si, we know who you are, Bernardino whispered.

It seemed for a spell like the earth would hold down the sun. But the sun poked up through the black crust. It wasn't *round,* yet. It was a fiery little knob, brightening, loosening back the black earth. It bulged more. Now it looked for all the world like a redskin wild plum—if it was to bulge one bulge more, it would streak out its purple plum juice. But it did bulge. Bigger. It was crammed with bright, all swole. And it didn't bust, either. It stoked its fires to orange and then to white. It stepped out of the earth. Oh it was too fierce now for eyes, too cruel in its singleness. Jensie covered her eyes. But still El Furioso Sol stabbed through: the orangeness between her fingers. Or plum juice. Right through the skin. Only her fingerbones kept dark.

Jensie peeped out between her bright fingers. There was still a blackness down in the roots, the last settlings of night. What was that? It felt for a minute as though the land had taken one big breath.

The sun knocked the darkness from the grass.

It was the day. It was the whole light.

It was the distances. And when she come to her folks, would they ever again know her?

Jensie lowered her head against the dirt. The hot sun was in her hair. She smelled the heavy smell of the dirt. And already the heat was pressing the crushed huisache daisies. One lay petal-scattered at her cheek, bruise-leafed. Such bitterness! Would her folks be like strangers when she come? Would her folks count her from another country? Because she wasn't who she used to be. Who was that little girl once who was called Jensie, one day beside a river, one day beneath pecans? Lost! Lost! A splintered mirror!

Bernardino said, "What are you thinking, Grullita?"

Jensie shook her head. The crushed huisache daisy. The stink of bitterness.

Bernardino said, "I know. You do not need to tell me."

Jensie sat up. She swallowed back the bitterness. She brushed her fingers through her hair. Way out on the prairie the mule and the cayote stood, the sun onto their flanks, their long necks down, browsing the last coolness from the grass.

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Jensie pulled back her hair. She felt the piece of flannel hanging half loose in her hair.

Her mama—the way her mama used to stand, staring out the door, twisting an end of hair in her finger. No she mustn't think on that, mustn't think on that.

Jensie got the flannel ribbon loose, but it was knotted and tangled with pieces of her hair. Bernardino said, "I will unknot it for you." Jensie tossed it to him. She held back her hair while he unknotted the ribbon.

The sun, climbing, shone into the serape lean-to. Jensie turned her back to it.

She held her hair. She squeezed her eyes shut. She would think on other things. Anything. "Where do the deer go, Bernardino?" she said.

"In the day?" Bernardino said.

"Si."

"They lie down in the brush."

"Do they have un lugar favorito—a favorite place?" Si. Talk to me. And that one beneath pecans—what hands she'd moved, what words she'd talked with—was another, different person.

"Si. Sometimes. They like to lie under cedar. Under el cedro they are as the brush, and you cannot see them. And the day is best for their sleep. By day, in this country, things are very still. Thus in his sleep el venado can hear what moves to harm him."

Jensie felt Bernardino's hand at the back of her neck. She let him tie the flannel.

"Early in the night, comprendes?" Bernardino said, "There is the breeze. Then the deer can walk silently. Also at night the grass is cool to eat."

His fingers tugged her hair, trying to loop the flannel. "No te muevas," he said. He had to start over.

Jensie laughed. She pulled against his fingers. She had a good mind to tease him. "No te muevas—don't move," he said again. Jensie giggled. Bernardino ran his fingers through her hair and grabbed tight to it. "*¡No te muevas!*" he said, and laughed. And Jensie laughed. She was gone wild herself. *O Bernardino, gentle me. Cover me with the shadow of your hand.*

Finally Bernardino got the flannel looped. "It is like tying water," he said. Then he said, "Ya está—it's done."

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"¡Ya está! ¡Ya está! ¡Ya está!" Jensie said. They both laughed.

Abruptly Jensie stood up. She said, "Now I will tend the horses."

"Today I shall do it," Bernardino said.

"No," Jensie said. "I want you to get well."

Bernardino said, "Senorita, you are a hard lieutenant."

Jensie crawled out from under the lean-to. "Beware of El Furioso Sol," Bernardino called after her. Jensie caught the horse and the mule. She gave them some water from los hoyos, and tied them under the mesquites. Hot as it already was, you'd have thought the horse and mule would be switching their tails against a power of flies. But like Bernardino had said, there wasn't a fly buzzing anywhere. And if it was a country of death, like Bernardino had said, it was a clean country. Swept by sun.

When Jensie come back to the lean-to, Bernardino was under it, toying with a mess of stones.

"What are all those stones for?" Jensie said.

"Grullita, look!" Bernardino said. He showed her the stones. "You and I. We play the game, eh? I teach you. It will make the day as short as in winter."

"There's enough stones there to fill a rooster's craw," Jensie said.

"Gallo is luck," Bernardino said. Jensie looked at him. He smiled. "You tease me," he said. "Come," he said, "play the game. It is a very fine game. It is the game of la pájara."

"La pájara?"

"Si. The game of the bird. The crowned one. The one who runs along the ground. Corre camino."

The roadrunner. Coming out from San Antonio. Her daddy's face. Ay! Her daddy sitting so strong beside her on the wagon. And that brown bird skittering long-legged from under Ginger, running as fast as most birds fly. What's that there *bird?* she'd said.

Some calls hit roadrunner, Honey. Some calls hit chaparral cock. I'd like to hitch it to this yere wagon. Git up, Ginger!

To the River Nueces. To the River Nueces.

O a splintered mirror!

Bernardino said, "Come. I will teach you to play. I would like to teach you."

Jensie looked down at him. He was watching her eagerly. She

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hadn't ever noticed that red speck caught in the brown iris of his eye before. She seen herself in his eyes. She knew then that that was who she was.

Bernardino said, "Why are you sad, Grullita? Do not be sad." He leaned toward her. He touched her dress.

Jensie sat down beside him. She said, "Si. Teach me the game, Bernardino."

"Si!" he said. "Si! It is a very fine game. Look!" he said. "It is of my own doing. I thought it up myself."

"I couldn't ever do that," Jensie said.

Bernardino said, "Sometimes I am alone, comprendes? The army is stopped. We are waiting, waiting, waiting. One cannot weep forever for what is lost. I am sitting beneath a saltbush, comprendes? There is nothing to do. Nada. But there are always stones. I say to myself: I will make a game of stones." He threw his head back. He rocked backward and forward, as proud as a green-necked rooster. "It is *easy*," he said. "I think of la pájara, who is alone. I think of el víboro, the snake, who is not her friend. I make a game. Si. I will teach it to you," he said. "You will be the first to know."

Jensie laughed. "Si, I will play," she said.

"Watch," Bernardino said. He held up two stones. "This is la pájara, the bird. This is el víboro, the snake. You know how they are enemies." He held up a third stone. "This stone is the stone for rolling, do you see?" Jensie nodded. She took the stone. It had a mark on one side. Bernardino said, "That is the eye of la pájara, one scratch. I mark it myself." He turned the stone over in her hand. "Here are two scratches, do you see? It is the sign of el víboro, when he bites."

Bernardino stretched his arm out onto the ground in front of him. "La pájara wishes to fill her nest with eggs, thus—." He took three more stones from under his palm and stuck them between his spread fingers. Jensie laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" he said.

"It's so many *stones*," she said.

"Si," Bernardino said, "it is un juego muy ponderoso—a very weighty game." They laughed. Bernardino went back to parsing out the game. He was proud of it.

"But el víboro wishes to eat la pájara's eggs, comprendes?"

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he said. "It is according to how the stone throws. Sometimes el víboro comes to the nest, and then I fear for la pájara. Sometimes el víboro eats la pájara's eggs or kills her. It is according to how the stone throws. But sometimes la pájara fills her nest, comprendes? Then she is joyful. You will be la pájara," he said. He put a stone in her hand.

They played the game. Jensie put her stone beside Bernardino's elbow, like he showed her. Bernardino put his stone on the other side. Then they jumped their stones—pájara, víboro—across Bernardino's arm and wrist, according to how the dice-stone rolled. It was the high sun and the long morning and the close smell of huisache daisies and the clicking of stones and crossings of their wrists as the stone rolled. Sometimes their wrists touched, crossing with stones. But Bernardino won the first game, because his snake had eaten all the eggs. He won the next game, too, because his stone come to the nest first, when there weren't any eggs in it, "and that kills la pájara," Bernardino said. He was making up new rules, Jensie said. No, Bernardino said, for she could see it must be this way. He just wanted to win, Jensie said. "Si," Bernardino said, "si," and started laughing. Then Jensie grabbed the dice-stone and threw it six times straight, without letting Bernardino have a single throw. Bernardino was roaring with laughter. But Jensie jumped her pájara-stone right up to the nest. "I win," Jensie said. "Two eggs do not fill a nest," Bernardino said. "Well, she's already *layed* the third one," Jensie said, "you just won't let go of it from your fist."

She dug under his hand for her stone. Bernardino wouldn't let her have that last stone. He was laughing. Jensie jerked at his fingers; that just made him laugh harder. She butted him with her head; then, while he was laughing, she worked the stone loose from his fist. "I win! I win!" she said again. She was laughing her ownself.

But that hot sun. So they rested a mite. Bernardino rubbed his shoulder where Jensie had butted him. "I am sorry, Bernardino," Jensie said. Bernardino said, "No tiene importancia."

After a spell Bernardino said, "Hyensi?"

"Si?" Jensi said.

"That is your name?" Bernardino said.

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"That is not how to say it."

"Yensee?"

"No," Jensie said.

"Heyensee?"

Jensie laughed.

"Chensee? That is your name?" Bernardino said. "Chensee?"

"*Jensie,*" Jensie said.

"Chensi."

Jensie rolled over onto her back, laughing.

"Chensi? Chensee. No. *J*e-yen-si."

"Si!" Jensie said.

"*J*eyensi. Ay, that is very hard. We have not that sound in español. *J*en-si. Jensi. That is your name?"

"Yes," she said, "that is my name.

"Jen-sie," she said.

"Jen-si," he said.

Jensie rolled over onto her side to look at him. "Yes," she said, "that is my name."

Then they lay a long while quiet, staring up at the serape. There wasn't any breeze. There was only the shade of the serape lean-to to cover them. The serape seemed to lift with the heat. Once a black-backed beetle come crawling six-legged across it, making its upside down way. Every two beetle-miles or so it would reach out and feel in the air with a slow, hard-shell puzzlement of its legs and feelers. "¡Vete!" Bernardino said once, when it hung straight above him. "¡Vete! ¡Vete! Go away." Finally the beetle come to a corner. It seemed grateful to get there. Then it was gone on around the mesquite. And the sun moved like a fire-shelled beetle along the tent of the sky. And sometimes Jensie and Bernardino slept, they were that drowsy, and sometimes they played la pájara, or talked, though it was too hot to talk much. And sometimes they ate the smoky venison and drank water.

Toward evening, the two of them walked out. They watered the mule and the horse, and hobbled them to browse in the grass. Then they went walking through the grass. It was all so quiet. It felt good to be up and about. The sun went down. The grass streaked Bernardino's and Jensie's ankles with its held warmth. But as they walked, the grass began to cool. The first of

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a breeze stirred the grass. It cooled Bernardino's and Jensie's faces and bodies, and stirred Jensie's hair. Now the sky was all gray toward night.

Bernardino said, "Listen." He stood stock still.

Jensie said, "I don't hear anything."

"Listen," he said.

Coo-uh-cuck-coo, who cooks for you? The song was strung out like the tag-end of a thread through the grass. La paloma, the dove. The white-wing.

Bernardino smiled. "There it is," he said.

They found the nest. A dove, brown-gray as the dusk, white on her wings, beat up from the nest. The nest wasn't much more than a stash of twigs layed flat onto the ground. Two white eggs were in it, curled around with specks of dusky feathers. The eggs were bright, and perfect in shape. "Don't touch them," Bernardino said. "If you do, she will not come back."

But carefully, without touching a thing else in the nest, Bernardino fetched up an egg.

Jensie gasped. "You shouldn't have done that!" she said.

Bernardino held the egg, white in his dark palm. "You are weary of venison?" he said.

"I don't want it," Jensie said.

"It is my gift, and the gift of la paloma."

"There weren't but two," Jensie said.

"It is for Jensi," Bernardino said. "I wish Jensi to have it. What else can I give? And birds and animals must give to us. This is as Dios Himself has commanded. So do not be sad, Grullita."

He put the egg in her hand. She held it. It was still warm with the bird and life of it.

"It is for you," Bernardino said.

Then she knew she would eat it. She was hungry to eat it. She was gone wild, that was what it was—just like Bernardino. She carried the egg back to the lean-to. Bernardino showed her how to open it. He chipped off the small end of the egg with his thumbnail.

"Suck it," he said. He held it to her mouth. O it tasted good! and she was gone wild.

"The dove will live," Bernardino said. "Dios watches the

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dove." He set the empty shell carefully between the angle of a branch and trunk of a mesquite. "It is my gift and the gift of the dove," he said. He pushed his hair back from his eyes.

Jensie said, "Gracias, Bernardino." Then Bernardino lay back. He seemed joyful. "It is well," he said.

The stars come out. The sky was clear and close as ever. That white eggshell shone, up in the mesquite, like a snagged star. Bernardino and Jensie looked up at the stars, the million pinpricks in the night. Jensie could have reached her hands up, almost, and stirred those stars, they seemed that close. Like stirring shiny flakes in the black settlings of a spring.

Bernardino said, "In the heavens all things are the reverse of here. On earth all things are seen only by day. But in the heavens all things are seen only by night. They are covered from sight in the day."

He said, "Look at the North Star, Grullita, where no bird can reach it, no matter how strong its wings."

"I see it. I could almost *touch* it."

"Si. But it belongs to Dios. And do you see also the Great Wagon that guards la Estrella del Norte? It circles backward. It drags its tongue behind."

"Big Dipper."

"Qué?"

"It is what they call it."

"Americano?"

"Si. For drinking agua."

"That is strange. It does not look like a gourd."

Jensie smiled. She could see his face in her mind's eye, and how he looked while he puzzled it. She watched his faces, inventing all the different ways of Bernardino.

"But if, as we say, it is the Wagon," Bernardino said, "do you know what I wish?"

"No, Bernardino, yo no sé."

"I wish, this one night, that it might move forward, in the manner of earth."

"¿Por qué, Bernardino?" Jensie said.

"That we might have this day again." Para que pudiéramos tener este día otra vez.

Flickings of wrists; crossings of stones; white shell of the dove's egg, broken, broken, broken in her throat.

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She said, "Si, I do wish it."

After a while Bernardino said, "Jensi?"

"Si?" she said.

"Where did you live when you were una niña?"

"En Misisipi." That seemed a long way off.

"I have not heard of that country. Is it like Méjico?"

"There are many trees there. There's a big river."

"In the north of Méjico, we do not have many trees. But there are mountains. And in Costeños, where I live, there are fields. They are on the sides of mountains."

"In Mississippi they have to cut down the trees to make fields."

"Misisipi," Bernardino said. "I would like to know of it. ¿Es Americano?"

"Si," Jensie said.

Bernardino said, "Si." And after a while he said, "And someday Tejas will be Americano. But now it is Mejicano."

They stared up at the stars. Jensie could hear the mule and the cayote browsing on the other side of the hoyos. She didn't know why, but the sound of those two animals browsing put a grief in her.

Jensie said, "What will you do when you go to Méjico?"

"If I go to Méjico," Bernardino said. "And shall I go to Costeños? The campamento of the army is there. They will remember the horses of General Manuel Mier y Teran. Shall I go to Coahuila? Shall I work on el rancho grande? Maybe someday I will *own* el rancho grande, eh?" He laughed. It was a bitter laugh. Then he said—so lonesome his voice seemed to come from a long way off—"Costeños." Then he said, "But before all this, I would like most to learn to read, as my uncle could. But when I was little, comprendes, I had to work in the fields, and so I cannot read. But I would like to learn to read."

"I can't read either, Bernardino," Jensie said.

"They say there are many fine things in books, Grullita," Bernardino said. "They say that men have taken ink, tinta, and put down many strange things in books, and I would like to know of them."

"I don't know what I want to do when I get home," Jensie said.

Bernardino said, "First, Grullita, you will grow, si? You will be la bella dama. Si. Do not say no. And people will wonder at

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you. You will wear combs in your hair. And three layers of dresses, with many colors to them. Men will do as you command."

"I don't care about that!" Jensie said, "I don't want that! Oh Bernardino, what shall I *do* when I am home? What will you do?"

Bernardino said, "I will think on you."

To have this day again!

Bernardino said, "When first I see you, I think: she is like a white bird lifting from the river. It hurts to see you. You are like la grulla, the crane, when she hears the hunter. She stands a moment still. She listens everywhere. Her neck is very tall and beautiful, and wet from fishing in the water. Her legs are long and beautiful and wet, and down about her feet her whiteness fills the water. Soon she will fly. That is how I will think of you."

"I don't want to go home," Jensie said. She was about to cry.

For a while Bernardino was quiet. Then he said, "You must."

"I'm afraid to go home, Bernardino," Jensie said.

She heard Bernardino turning in the dark. She felt him watching her from the dark. She swallowed, to keep back the crying.

"Why are you afraid?" Bernardino said.

"They will not know me. I do not know myself."

"You are La Grullita," Bernardino said.

"Si," she said, "si," and felt a stinging wildness in her eyes. Bernardino touched her wrist.

"You are Jensi,"

"I do not know who I am."

Bernardino squeezed her wrist tight. It held back her tears. "You are Jensi," he said.

"Si! Si! And what will you do when you go to Méjico?" she said.

Bernardino held her wrist. But now he was stroking her wrist gently. She let him do it. He said, "I will think of you."

She said, "I will think of you." Because this new thorn. Because what she hadn't known before. Because what had come out of the dark of her, like black thorn from the dark branch of plum, and hooked to her, and hooked her to branch and leaf and flower. Black thorn, white flower. The cruel and loving tree of it.

He held to her wrist. He said, "Today I do not care about the world. I would like to stay here forever, Grullita. Jensi! ¡Mi Grullita!

"But tomorrow comes, and los hoyos dry, and we are not like lizards who can hold water in their tails. You must go home."

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Jensie shut her eyes. She seen his face, behind her eyes, and it was wild and it was gentle. That red speck in his eye, where she lived. O Bernardino!

What will you do when you go to Méjico? I will think of you. I will think of you.

Ay! And was that *her* voice, of a sudden in the dark, all cracked among the dark? It sounded like the noise of a hurt rabbit. Bernardino squeezed her wrist.

He said, "Jensi!"

"¿Qué?" she said. The strong of his hand around her wrist.

He was leaning above her in the dark.

"Jensi," he said.

"¿Qué?" she said.

He was saying Jensi, Jensi, Jensi on her eyes.

"¿Qué?" she cried, "¿Qué?" ¿Qué? ¿Qué?" and for a minute she was afraid. But there come a catch in her throat. For the sake of him. For Costeños. For his eyes. For his hands so awful slender. There come a catch in her heart. Then she flew upward to him, or him to her, while her arms gathered what they never had before.

It was his mouth to her ear lighter than any wind might blow from the tongues of summer to stir a hundred parts in her. It is your ear too small for my heart to bear. Here behind your ear where I cannot see it, mi corazón, it is pardusco, the mouse's color. Here where I kiss in front of your ear, it is too white. It is the wing of the dove. It hurts me. This is your face, she said, mi corazón. How shall I kiss your face? he said, for it is lighter than ash and might fall so. O it is lighter than the ash of los olmos, mi corazón! These are your hands, she said. Give me your lips, that I might speak, they said, mi corazón. You are another country, he said. Taste my hands, she said, are they different from yours? Have they more bones in them than yours? It is your body, he said, it is your mind, it is your heart, it is where you come from and where you shall go. My love is in my bones, she said, if you can find it.

So that he spelled her with his lips, to a grief of tenderness.

Mi corazón.

He was laughing above her in the dark: bright, broken, racking laughter that shook him convulsively.

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"*¡Muerte! ¡Muerte!*" he cried. "There *is* no death. There *is* no death. There is *no death!*"

She held the weight of him, his trembling gone, his face to her neck, while this great womanly calmness grew over her.

VI

This here was the breaks of the Nueces. They had ridden a long way along the ridge, with that canyon always off down yonder. Then the other side of the ridge had begun to slope. Here, where those two canyons come together, it was the breaks of the Nueces.

Somewhere behind Jensie and Bernardino, a morning's ride back, the plateau had lost its tightness. It had begun to roll. And farther back than that, yes, ages back, this had brought an opening for the weather. The weather had dug in slow, ages and ages slow, and caused a slope which caused a gully which caused a canyon. That is how it must have begun, Jensie figured. And then those canyons had commenced to dig in deeper and deeper, always headed south. Now, down in the deepest places, it showed the limerock to its bones. The rock lay in long naked slabs, the way Jensie reckoned God must have put them, in the Bible times, slab on slab. And in some places there was a long washboard row of ribs, along the bottom of the canyon, like some stony-footed mountain lion had clawed it. The noon sun brought out the pales and yellows of the rock.

Jensie sat on the blue cayote, and Bernardino sat on the mule. They looked down to where the two canyons come together. The dry-bed canyons. Then Bernardino and Jensie looked southward, where more and more and more canyons come together—all stone and shallow dirt, and splotched with brush—to be the Nueces. But to Jensie it seemed more like they were sparse-backed mountains instead of canyons, away off down yonder to the south, and that here she and Bernardino were on top of this tallest mountain of them all, and the plateau behind them was the top of the world.

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And somewhere yonder to the south, past where Jensie could see, a valley would be opening wide, full of trees and a river, and that was where her folks were.

They rode down into the canyon. On the way down, Bernardino shot a turkey. Jensie hadn't even known there was a turkey there. All her mind had been set on getting down into that canyon —the horse onto its hocks, and every step a jolt to Jensie, and a jerk downward. It was hard work. Then that rifle had sounded and nearly scared the liver and lights out of her. But from right under a laurel bush close by come a squawk and gargle and thumping thrashing of feathers.

Bernardino ran down to the bush. "¡Mira!" he shouted. He dragged up a gobbler turkey. It was a big one. It was still thrashing. Bernardino let it down onto the ground, keeping hold of its legs. It flapped some more, stirring up all kinds of dust, and then flapped some less, and then its wings slacked; the bluish purse of its eye closed, and it was quiet.

Bernardino hefted it up. He could hardly lift it into the air, it was so heavy. Its wings spread out loose, bronze and barred. Its neck swung naked-headed, wrinkled blue near the ear pans. Its red wattles drooped. It had old grandpap whiskers on its breast.

Bernardino laughed. "You are weary of venison, Jensi?" he said.

He fetched the turkey to Jensie. "It is for you," he said. The blue cayote shied away from it. Jensie got down from the saddle and quieted the horse. Bernardino cut a hank of hair from the cayote's mane and tied the turkey's legs together. He hung the turkey from the crosstree, on the cayote's blind side.

They rode down into the canyon. The turkey swung below Jensie's knee, pushing its dead heat and feathers at her, its shingled legs a rasp of golden-scale against the crosstree. The turkey's dead toes curled upward. Now its hulk was without any use for it, and it hung heavier than ever it could fly. Its barred wings widened lazy-fan, its gold-tipped tail spread careless, and the vent loose-holed. The whole skin of it sagged, easing its feathers loose and mussy. As it turned in the sun the feathers changed to green and bronze and purple. It was a heavy bird.

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Bernardino and Jensie rode down into the canyon. They rested a spell, and drank the last of the water. Then they rode a long way down the canyon. The mule and blue cayote picked their way deer-footed across rocks and between boulders. The canyon walls rose like mountains on both sides. There was nothing but rocks everywhere—long stone slabs and boulders and sometimes a dusty coleche rock. Only here and there was some bunchgrass or a spread of yellow bitterweed. Once Jensie and Bernardino come to a clump of canyon walnut. "¡Espera!" Bernardino said. He reached out and pinched the leaves of the midget walnut.

"Un momento," he said.

Jensie rode back up to him. Bernardino climbed from the mule. He commenced pulling up rocks from the dry creekbed. Jensie got down to watch him. "What are you doing?" she said. Bernardino's fingers were wet. "Agua," he said. From under the ground, into the hole he'd dug, come water. It wasn't much water—just a smidgen trickle of it. But it began to fill up the hole. The blue cayote whinnied.

Jensie tasted the water. It was as sweet and clear as if it had been squeezed from the deepest, stone-coldest places. Jensie was sure surprised. "How did you know there was water here?" she said.

"The leaves of the walnut," Bernardino said. "They are very oily."

They drank water and lay down to rest together against a rock.

It was good here. It was peaceable. The afternoon trickled down about them. The rocks were so quiet and peaceable. Up in the midget walnut the leaves were quiet. The mule and the horse hung their heads, resting. Jensie watched the sky easing across. She was filled with the quiet. Up in the canyons somewhere a grasshopper buzz: peaceable.

"Tan azul," Bernardino said.

"¿Qué dijiste?" Jensie said.

"The sky up there," Bernardino said, and pointed. "How can it be so blue?"

"Right now my father is out working the bottoms," Jensie said. "That same sky." After a while she said, "I don't know why I'm so all-the-time hungry."

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Bernardino jumped to his feet. He grinned. "I will cook the turkey," he said. "We will eat the turkey here."

"I thought we would get to my folks tonight."

"Si," Bernardino said.

He said, "It will be dark then, Jensi."

Dee! Hush! Rufus, there's somebody at the door. Then her mama staring at her through the greasewick smoke, wondering who she was. That's how it would be! Jensie was scared. Scared. She knew it. And the closer she come to that cabin, the worse scared she got. Whatever would they think of her? Would they at all know her?

What would they think of Bernardino?

Bernardino said, "There is a grass here, Grullita. There is water, and wood for fire."

She loved him, that was all there was to it. She loved the way he talked, hungering from the whole life of him. And how his hands asked and touched and put down and lifted, moving (like right now! see?) from the loom of his mother's fingers. But she guessed his eyes were the eyes of his daddy, the way the color would darken in his eyes when he was sad. She loved the darkness in his eyes. And how he'd push back (see it!) that old drag of hair from his forehead, and sometimes smile. And laugh sometimes—sometimes laugh like morning, like pulling back the covers and you jump from bed. But it hurt to hear him laugh, almost as much as to see him sad. Cruel, sweet hurt. She didn't know why. And to love him was like you owned a labor of land, and could walk on out and breathe the air of it, and eat the food it grew you; no, it was like *she* was the land, and she would feed him, and he would breathe her; no, or both.

O Bernardino, cover me with the shadow of your hand.

Bernardino had fetched the turkey. He set it on the ground in front of Jensie, its legs stiff as stone, its feathers soft against the stones. It was a big bird.

Bernardino looked at her.

Jensie smiled. She said, "Yes, I am very hungry."

"*Huchaa!*" Bernardino shouted. He was happy. Jensie laughed to see him.

They plucked the bird. Its feathers popped from its pebbled skin, sometimes in whole handfuls, sometimes one tight quill

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by one tight quill. Next thing they knew, they were blowing feathers at each other and both laughing like crazy. They rolled in the feathers and puffed feathers at each other's faces and scattered feathers everywhere. Feathers floating in the air. Their laughter floating in the air. That turkey's show was scattered everywhere, across the ground, among the rocks, up in the walnut tree and in Jensie's hair. In Bernardino's hair. Down their backs even.

Feathers among their kisses even. But that gobbler turkey was watching. He was so glum. So they cooked him. They gutted him and put him on a stick. Bernardino got a fire started from the pan of his rifle. Then he and Jensie broke dead branches from the walnut clump, and fetched a chunk of dead mesquite from the canyonside, and built a first-rate fire. When the fire was down to coals and the mesquite smoke pale they put that turkey above it and had him do a dance. Pretty soon his fat was squeaking through the pinholes and steaming and sputting onto the coals. It was nigh more than Jensie and Bernardino could stand. They had to stand it, though. They had to cook that old acorn-eater a long while, he was such a big one. He was a juicy one. He was a tasty-smelling one. He was a crisp-skinned, shrunk-loose-from-the-hocks, breast-busted, sweet-smoke-smelling, speckle-burnt, deep-turkey-meated, juicy one, and it was more than a body could hardly stand. Finally they couldn't stand it any longer. They lit into him.

He was hot. He burnt their fingers. He made their fingers greasy. They pulled off his drumsticks. His skin was so crisp it crackle-split. And the cooked joints undid. Then he lay open, all dark-turkey-meat and steaming. They chunked the meat into their mouths. It was good. It was hot and turkey in their mouths. But all at once Jensie was thinking about how, when they come to her folks' place, there would be *more* good things to eat. Now whatever was the matter with her? It seemed like she was hungry even when when she was eating! Jensie giggled. Bernardino glanced across at her. He looked so funny with his mouth full of turkey, and Jensie giggled some more. And when they come to her folks' place, there'd be things to eat that Jensie bet Bernardino hadn't ever eaten before. She bet he hadn't ever eaten poor-doo, or cush with a lot of onions in it, or pump-

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kin bread, or okra. Her mama could cook all those things. Jensie could too, because her mama had showed her. And pretty soon it would be the time of year for a green-grape pie.

Jensie said, "Bernardino, when we get home, Mama and I will cook you a green-grape pie. Then you can eat it."

Bernardino said, "I would like that, Grullita."

Well, here was the wishbone, but the bullet had broken it. So they couldn't make a wish.

The breast meat come loose easy from the keel. It was dry and stringy and white, even if it was wild. It pulled apart easy. But Jensie'd had her fill. "¡Ay!" she said. She lay back against a rock. That felt good. The fire near her feet felt good. The turkey in her belly felt awful good. There was a greasy good taste around her mouth. And her daddy could teach Bernardino things. To mend harness and split shingles and to rive with a froe. Her daddy knew how to make a tumbler by burning a string around a bottle and then filing the edges smooth with a stone, and he could teach Bernardino.

Jensie said, "Bernardino, when we get home my father will teach you a hundred things. To read, even. Mi padre can read. And we'll go down and help him work in the bottoms."

Bernardino didn't say anything for a while. Then he said, softly, "I would like to do that."

And this here river, it was open to the morning sun, clear and trickle-tongued, didn't need to keep no secrets. That gravel bar over there was busted out now into a sight of purple phlox. This river had rolled those washed-up stones from far lonesome places, yes, but now look at it. Rich and flowersome and free.

This here river.

It owned itself. It owned this whole valley. It bent the tallest sun to cool onto its dapple rocks.

This here river.

O this here river!

And here, in this sudden meadow place, it was freest, openest of all. The grass upward grew. The trees upward and upward grew. That was all this here river ever had to know, and it knew it for ever and ever.

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A man was standing in the lower end of the meadow. He had stepped out of the hackberrys. He was eyeing Bernardino and Jensie.

Jensie reined in her cayote. Bernardino trotted up alongside her. "Siga yendo—keep going," he said.

They rode together down across the meadow.

The man was leaning on his rifle, one knee bent. He had his head tilted back, eyeing them. It wasn't until Jensie was up close that she could see it was because his left eyelid drooped that he had to tilt his head back that way, in order to see out of it.

The man squinted up at them from the slant of his head. He waited until they were up close. Then his right eye blinked. But not the other eye.

Bernardino and Jensie looked down at him. He stood stock still, looking right back. His face was corncob red. It was splotched with rusty freckles. His eyebrows were a rusty red and long as switches, and his eyelashes were orange, stiff as the lashes of a hog's eyes. Red. Red thicket in each ear. His hair red, red as fire almost. And his beard a brighter red still, and full-up of whatever he'd spat across it. He spat across it right now. He squinted his blue eye up at Jensie from the tilt of his head.

"Halloo," Jensie said.

The man squinted up at her. It wrinkled the scar that cut across his cheek, half hid by beard. He reminded Jensie of an old, cracked, yellow gourd, left too long in the bucket and gone to mold. Especially his beard and his leather, sweaty-black clothes reminded her of it.

His beard twitched. He said, "I'd a-never a-reckoned hit."

"What does he say?" Bernardino said. He was looking at that scar.

"Yo no sé," Jensie said.

"¿Quién es él?" Bernardino said.

"Yo no sé quién es."

"Talk Meskin like a regular greaser, don't ye," the man drawled. "But I know thet white hair."

Jensie looked at him. The man squinted harder than ever. Jensie said, "¿Señor, conoce usted . .?"

"I don't talk hit," the Texan drawled. He spat across his beard.

"Do you know my daddy?"

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The Texan grinned, all yellow-toothed among red beard.

"I reckon. Holped him to put in his spring plantin'."

"¡Ay, Bernardino!" Jensie said. "¡El conoce a mi padre!"

The Texan squinted at her. "If hit don't beat all," he said.

Jensie slid from the cayote. "Is my mama all right? Is my daddy all right?" she said.

" I reckon."

"Is little Dee all right?"

"Sometimes he gits to cryin' after yuh."

"¡Ay!" Jensie said. It was might'near more than she could stand. She pushed her head into the cayote's neck. The critter breathed and shifted.

Bernardino said, "What does he say, Grullita?"

¡Ay! Mi madre, sus manos arrugadas de tanto lavar. Mi padre, trabaja todo el día en el campo por amor de nosotros. Y mi hermano, a quien fui tan mala, llora por mí. Ellos se acuerdan de mí: My mama's hands all wrinkled from washing. My daddy working all day in the bottoms, to spell out his love for us. And little Dee, that I was mean to, crying after me. They remember me.

Now she seen their faces.

"They remember me!" she said.

Bernardino said, "Do not cry, Jensi."

"I want to go home, Bernardino," Jensie said.

Bernardino looked at her. Then he looked down at the mule's neck.

"We will go home now, Bernardino," Jensie said.

Bernardino's fingers twisted and untwisted in the mule's mane. He talked down at the mule's neck. He looked at the Texan. Bernardino said, "¿Jensi?"

"¿Si?" Jensie said.

"This man knows your father?"

"Si, Bernardino," Jensie said.

"He is a friend to your father?"

"He says he has worked with him."

"He is a Tejano?"

"Si."

Bernardino stared at the mule's neck. He said, "Then go with him. He will take you to your home."

"What do you mean?"

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Bernardino said, "I cannot go with you."

"¿Qué estás diciendo, Bernardino?" Jensie said.

Bernardino unsnagged his fingers from the tangled mane. "Yo voy a Méjico," he said.

Jensie ran to him. His face was turned away. She grabbed his knee. The mule shied away. Its gear rattled and the crosstree creaked.

"Do not touch me," Bernardino whispered. "He is watching us."

"You said you would go home with me!"

Bernardino said, "Yo voy a Méjico."

"I love you!" Jensie said.

The mule shied sideways from Jensie. Bernardino held him. He whispered, "¡Por favor! ¡Por favor! *Please. Please.* He is watching us."

Jensie said, "*You said you would go home with me!*"

Bernardino lay the reins against the mule's neck. The mule pivoted. Bernardino held him.

"Ya está," Bernardino said.

"¿Qué? ¿Qué?"

"I am a Mexican."

"¡Ay! ¡Ay!" Jensie all at once cried. "*¿Entonces has mentido?*" Rage looped through her like a dry-as-dust rope. "*¿Entonces tú me has mentido?*"—*then did you lie to me? Was it all a lie?*

Bernardino said, "I cannot go home with you."

Jensie stared, her fists squeezing her dress, crumpling it.

"¡Bandido!" she suddenly screamed.

"¡Ay, Jensi!"

"¡Bandido! ¡Bandido! ¡Bandido!" Jensie screamed. It come out like knots of rope jerking from her gullet.

Bernardino looked at her. Jensie said, "You are like Toral! You are like el Nahautl!"

Bernardino blinked. He said, "Adios." He gave the mule a kick and started to ride up the meadow. The cayote whinnied. The mule honked back. Then the blue cayote took off after them, trotting, its gourds bobbing, its head pumping, its reins dragging in the grass.

"¡Bandido! ¡Bandido!" Jensie hollered. Her rage lifted her up onto her toes—it was like a bone had cracked when the rifle cracked behind her.

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Bernardino's arms flung up. He fell sideways to the ground.

"¡Qué has hecho!"

Smoke curled from the Texan's rifle. "No use to waste them horses," he said.

"¡*Diablo*!" Jensie screamed. She ran to Bernardino. She ran as hard as she could. It took all her breath.

When she got to him, he was lying on his back.

"Bernardino!" Jensie said.

He looked up at Jensie. He didn't seem too bad hurt. He tried to smile. "Grullita," he said.

He said, "I could not have lived without you."

But that man was walking up.

Jensie jumped to her feet. The mule was near by. Jensie grabbed the mosquete. She spun around and aimed it.

"¡Vete!" she hissed. "¡Vete! ¡Vete!"

The Texan stopped in his tracks. He squinted at her from the slant of his head.

"Gone plumb wild," he said.

He took another step toward her.

"¡Yo te voy a matar!" Jensie hissed. *I'll kill you!* She pointed the musket at him.

The Texan squinted his eyes at her. His beard shone fiery red in the sun. He spat across it. He wiped the back of his wrist across it. He didn't say anything for a minute. Then he said, "No, you wouldn't do that." He said, "I'm yore own kind."

"¡*Yo te voy a matar*!" Jensie said.

"Jist been a-livin' too long with 'em is all. Yew'll git over hit."

He squinted at her. He said, "Wal, I'll go fetch yore paw." He turned and started down the meadow.

Jensie swayed from side to side. It was like the whole world was spinning, about to pitch her at him, to bite into his neck, *o to fix him good* with a bullet smack between his shoulder-blades, splat his red hair redder yet, nor wonder at all if his blood come black, or if his heart come out tumbling black. And now she had him in her sights. But never pulled the trigger. Now he was gone into the hackberrys and it was too late.

Jensie sank to the ground. The mosquete clattered to the ground. Jensie ran her fingers through her hair, pulled hard at her hair. She took a deep breath.

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She looked at Bernardino. She said, "Well, now you've *got* to come home."

She crawled on her hands and knees to him. His hand was stretched out to her. He was still smiling.

But his eyes were so wide, looking up.

She said, "Bernardino?"

She touched his hand. It gave way to hers.

She said, "Bernardino!"

She touched his face. It turned to her. His eyes! They seemed so solid in their stare.

Bernardino!

She scrambled up to him. She pulled open his serape. He's not hurt! Thank God, he's not hurt.

His head turned like a toy.

"Bernardino!"

And held him to her. And when she lifted him up, she seen his whole story; the ground was soaked with it.

But look! His lips! Moved! His wrist: about to lift, about to wipe that milky stare from his eyes—*see it stir? See that hump of a pulse through it?*

The shadow of a bird.

No he ain't dead.

O say something!

Bernardino.

Mi Bernardino!

And held him, and rocked him back and forth, back and forth in her arms, the wet grass squeaking underneath.

These are your lips. These are the bruises in your face I kiss. These are the dear warm cheeks, here, where I kiss. You were . . . so gentle . . . back of them. This is your black hair I brush back from your face. O my dear one, my dear one! This is your face. O how can I ever tell you with my breath? How can I kiss your eyes enough to know? My heart, my love, my child, my child! I kiss your wrists; o these, these are your dear, dear hands I kiss. They are so. Slender. O my dear love. My dear love. How can I ever kiss your hands enough to know?

He is so quiet from me.

Jensie shook all over. A cruel pain stabbed through her, into

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her belly, into her lowest places, and cut, and twisted, and let up a thin animal cry from out of her.

Then come her breath. Then come her creaking sobs.

She fetched him to the river. She layed him out careful on the grass and washed him and covered him. She watched with him. Up in the broomwillows a brown wife fretted *check check check* from her nest; from down the river somewhere her mate cried *o-ka-leee*—then he come flashing back, beating his red-patch wings, fetching things. And this here river . . .

Never see you more?

O goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye. Do you know what that means? Do you know what that means? Adiós. *Adiós.* O goodbye, goodbye, goodbye!

I am nothing. Nada.

I will be always with you.

And night come on. And a night breeze come down from the plateau. And it seemed like in the settling dark his skin was getting lighter and lighter, until only it was his bruises that were dark.

And night come on.

Then she heard her daddy calling Jensie.

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VERNON YOUNG

Fat Shakespeare, Fat City, Lean Wilderness

A CAPTAIN, REPORTING TO DUNCAN, in Act I, Scene 2, concludes his description of the battle with the words—

> Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
> Or memorize another Golgotha,
> I cannot tell—
> But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

These lines, *including the last,* fairly express my own sentiments at the close of Roman Polanski's *Macbeth,* all but the worst Shakespeare ever filmed. If it wasn't as Now as Tony Richardson's *Hamlet* or as West-Side-Storyish as Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (in which you expected the principals to introduce themselves by drawling, "We're Montague and Capulet—we rob banks") it was more blatant than either and distilled even less poetry, verbal or visual. *Macbeth* is a drama for the ear alone, I'm by now convinced. Radio would be its best theatre medium where, unaffronted by those invariably bogus witches and undistracted by one more director's strenuous invention when required to bring Birnam's bloody woods to Dunsinane, we could listen to the *poetry* and forget that the plot is one of the most asinine among the great plays. Not normally a follower of Lamb on this subject, I do believe *Macbeth* and *King Lear,* among the tragedies, are virtually unstageable (hence unfilmable) unless the director will hair-shirt himself into employing a minimal scenery and the most parsimonious suggestions of real blood and natural thunder. Filmwise, to gallop across miles of plausible landscape, *because it's there,* is of no account in this context. Nobody gives a damn what the Scottish countryside looked like when it was being scoured of thanes. Shakespeare's version of these events is not enhanced by topographical redundancy; his drama is claustral, the skirmishes are incidental and if done 'twere well they were done quickly; the two or three tortured protagonists suffer in closeup, their correlative setting a dimly emergent heath, battle-dust on the horizon, a castle of the mind hung with chains and bats, where ghosts and airborne daggers are false creations proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain. Polanski's setting is a panoramic slaughter-house in which the language is only impedimenta unreasonably holding up the "action." When, in a brief intercut moment, Banquo ob-

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serves, "It will be rain tonight," and the murderer, felling him with a blow, remarks, "Let it come down," the director should cry, "Cut! —and print it!" To extend this encounter to a prolonged combat and knifings in the creekbed, like a Western sequence, is to dissipate hopelessly the terse irony of that inspired figure of speech. All the way, this film gets further and further out instead of driving steadily inward to the lining of the metaphor and the interior castle.

Why? Because Polanski and Kenneth Tynan, friends and partners in mischief and obscenity, were trading on the vogue for porno and spilled guts. Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep naked as a gunbarrel because Tynan, production advisor, "researched" the customs of the time and came up with the disclosure that no woman of Lady Macbeth's rank would have worn a nightgown! Tynan will go to any length to prove that he's virile as well as trendy. Polanski, poor boy, was christened in blood and everything he touches turns sticky red. The few admirably directed minutes were those when Macduff, learning that his wife and children have been put to the sword, is unable to express instant wrath. Would that many others in the production had shared his restraint . . . I suspect that Jon Finch might be a credible actor in other roles; as Macbeth, he was so subordinated, leashed and drowned out that he moved in a forgivable daze, throughout. You can't recite "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" while descending steps, in company, preparing for battle; you can't post-dub the speech either, with any conviction. As for that obtuse blonde, her sleepwalking was no surprise; she had been doing so from the outset—and in place of the language written by Shakespeare, she could have just as well been murmuring, "The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plain."

To speak by outline, *Macbeth* and *The Godfather* have much in common: in each the continuity is monomaniacal and accordion-pleated: murder, counter-murder, counter-counter-murder ("What's the newest grief?" "That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker./ Each minute teems a new one"); in each a father-figure is to be avenged and the "hero" morally consents to be led by "witches" into an empire of the jackal and the werewolf. (Strictly, Michael Colleone is closer to Malcolm and Don Vito is as far from Macbeth as he is from Duncan, since he never expresses an ounce of remorse!) If *The Godfather* has no verbal music to compensate for its unrelieved (but versatile) emphasis on assault and battery, decapitation and detonation, neither has *Macbeth* when, as I have pointed out, the words are mere obstructions to a wide-screen brawl. *The Godfather* is by far the more sophisticated product: paced and measured, clocked for laughs and intakes of fearful breath, factory-tested for social reactions to local color. The ethical issues are another matter: in a word, fraudulent. We can scarcely be brought to encore

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the "courage" of Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola if they had to submit their manuscript to the Mafia for approval. Within the story we are confidently expected to empathize with Michael (Al Pacino) when at the last, because Daddy, the murdering bastard, has belatedly got what he long ago deserved, he resolves (against the revealed grain of his intelligence) to be a big-wheel Dago assassin like the Old Man. Forever the same bleat in the American movie: if everyone else is on all fours, why try to stand upright? The explicit comparison of the Mafia with the system of political democracy is a cheap, cowardly interpolation to suck approval from the new and nubile Left. Institutions with elements in common are not thereby identical. (Doesn't anybody take Philosophy 1 A any more?) The Mafia is a closed society, with an uncommon capacity for expanding its influence by intimidation; its roots are the family and the clan, with analogies as far apart as Montenegro and Tennessee. By an historical "accident" it emigrated to a permissive industrial society where it has flourished shamefully. Those who compose it, condone it, deal with it, are only beyond the law because laws were made for men; these are hyenas, wolverines, gorillas—shaped like men.

Ultimately, *The Godfather* is as monotonous as Polanski's *Macbeth* since, as far as the distance between exposition and denouement is concerned, it could have ended at least an hour before it did. However, this and other reservations are likely to strike one after the fact. As one watches the film—hour after hour—it does enthrall, largely because the *actors* are so shockingly and indelibly the real Wop thing: all who play the Colleone sons and notably, beside, Al Lettieri as the lynx-faced creep, Sollozo. And I'll recall, for some time, Sonny Colleone in his starched shirt-sleeves, cravat not yet tied, descending on Carlo like a barbered cyclone, kicking and beating his brother-in-law until he rolls on the ground, then all but thumping his brains in with a garbage-can lid. Carlo never lays a glove on him and Sonny drives off, cravat still dangling, in a cloud, you feel, of undispersed *eau de cologne*.

All the same, *The Godfather* is the Film as Industry. *Fat City* is a work of art. This is the movie John Huston had under his skin for years to justify all the premature applause. And considerable credit should be reserved for Leonard Gardner who wrote the beautifully tacit script (from his own novel). Allowing for the dreary level of consciousness conveyed by characters who live in the basement of themselves, the film is as perfect as a film can be: a kind of American *Lower Depths,* it takes place in a California town where sunshine is merely something that makes everyone in the film squint, so much of his time is spent in the gym, in the ring, in a bar, in an unmade bed. None of them know the color of the sky. Periodically, after a lengthy interior sequence, Huston shoots the glaring, blank façade

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of the gym building; you instinctively reach for your dark glasses. The deadbeats and dumb hopefuls who comprise this lost colony are dupes of their own making; especially, one might add, they are victims of their total helplessness when groping for language. You feel that if they ever augmented their vocabulary with two fateful words, the increase could change their lives: they might just understand that they are trying to punch their way out of paper bags they have themselves inflated and climbed into. Reuben Lura, the fight manager, is the only articulate figure, and nobody listens to him. Majestic, as he reassures his "stable" that a defeat or two don't mean nothin'—while they're getting their ears pinned down for fifty bucks—or as he discourses in bed, to his half-asleep Mexican wife, on the fine points of promoting "a good clean boy," he's a sort of local Godfather—and, if you like the social fable, he's futile, precisely in the degree that he's harmless.

The rhythm of recurrence is masterfully worked out. Tully (Stacy Keach) wakes up in a fleabag hotel. Under the influence of a sudden resolve to go back into the game, he walks down the corridor (you can smell the liver-and-onions) where the shaded overhead lights suggest the exit gangway from a fight ring. Later on, Lucero also wakes up alone in a hotel room (with blood in his urine) and when he's walloped by Tully he stalks out of the locker-room, nattily dressed and all alone, under just such a ceiling of lights, as Tully, the groggy victor, is embraced by a troop of friends. A pyrrhic victor: he's in worse shape than Lucero and trying to work up righteous indignation over the paltry hundred dollars he earned by barely staying off of the canvas. Yet he *knows* what the rewards are; this is the way he yearly dies, choosing the executioner who will ratify his swift retreat into an alcoholic haze. Made to his order is Oma, the sado-masochist barfly. She's kinky for the dark-skinned races, since she's obviously frigid—a condition adroitly interpreted by the actress (Susan Tyrell, in the performance of the year) who makes with the sultry mouth and simian arms but keeps her trunk rigid, pelvis to neck. Mouth on the bias, shoulders hunched, one hand pinching a cigarette, the other clasping a bottle, she memorializes herself (and her world) with that savage, throaty outcry in the crowded bar—"I b'lieve evrybody's gotta right to live his *own* life! So *screw everybody!*" Gardner's dialogue is mercilessly in the picture. When Oma tearfully assures Tully, "You're the only slob in this place who's worth a shit!," he replies with gratitude and reverent sobriety—"I appreciate that." Tully is on the way out; Ernie, clean, friendly and not too bright, is on the way up, for whatever up is worth in this scheme of things. If Tully has picked Oma to punish himself, Ernie has picked or let himself be picked by, a sweet-cool, well-spoken little bourgeois killer: he's against the ropes for life, no matter how often he wins "on a decision."

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The end of the film is quietly staggering: a view from Inside Tully. Dead drunk, he importunes the reluctant Ernie into joining him around a cup of coffee. With the embarrassed concession we often make to a friendly souse, Ernie sits at the counter and Tully stares, frog-like, at the fry-cook, a wizened Mexican of simple dignity and at least four-score years. Pity and scorn sweating it out, Tully demands: "How would you like to wake up one morning and be *him?* God, what a *waste,* huh?" Ernie finds nothing to say. Abruptly, for Tully—the life of things cuts off. The camera transfixes all the occupants of the cafe; everybody freezes, and a dead silence reigns. Tully is staring in horror at a world of the lifeless. Ernie makes as if to leave, Tully comes out of his trance and desperately begs him to stay and *talk.* Again Ernie obliges but neither he nor Tully can produce a syllable. And on that shot, the silent pair facing us, Ernie sipping his coffee nervously, Tully staring into his own emptiness, *Fat City* ends. No dialogue. . . .

If Tully had "dropped out" a century earlier, he might well have disappeared into the Rocky Mountains, like Jeremiah Johnson, fur trapper. If he had, he would have become a squaw man. Ernie's fate would have more likely paralleled that of Johnson—fleeing in advance the pestilence of uniformity and the bear-trap being set for him by a wife in Stockton. At the close of Sidney Pollack's wonderful film—to make my connection less fortuitous—Jeremiah is *for the moment* winning (i.e, a battle for survival), on points. . . . Last year, in these pages, I maintained that Jan Troell's *Unto A Good Land* had beaten American film-makers on their own Western ground. Someone must have heard me! I'm prepared to eat Crow (pun intentional). *Jeremiah Johnson* has not the scope or the immense inventiveness of Troell's movie but in its own way (it's about one-third the length), concentrating on a single season's adventure and on one man, it is unmatched by any film attempting to breach the same territory. Of Johnson we know nothing retrospective, save what we know of any man, chary of words, who has a virgin forest in his breast instead of a heart. Jeremiah is a tenderfoot when, in the autumn, he moves out from what there was of "civilisation" (mid-19th-century frontier); before spring—as far as the film takes him—he has already crossed over; he has eaten the heart of the savage and is equal to any Blackfoot or Crow on the warpath.

From a scoffing veteran who hunts grizzly bear (Will Geer) he learns how to track elk; from a demented woman whose family has been wiped out by Blackfeet he inherits a surviving boy, struck dumb by terror. From Skinhead (Stefan Gierasch), a weird and irrepressible killer boasting a shaved cranium (to frustrate the Indian

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appetite for scalp) he learns how to be tactful when offered a gift he doesn't want, the chief's daughter. So knolls *his* knell. The sequel is rich in comedy—Jeremiah toting a kid who won't talk to him and a squaw whose language he can't understand. Comedy is not for keeps: against his better judgment, Johnson leads a rescue party through a Crow burial ground; when he returns to his lodge he finds his squaw and the boy slaughtered. This is the *perepetia.* This is the decisive juncture at which, after making a funeral pyre of his homestead, Johnson reverts; the rest of the way he is creature of the wild and blood brother to the Crow who hunts him. Two reunions and farewells close the next cycle of his odyssey. Meeting Skinhead again, he asks him where he's bound for. "Same place as you, Johnson," Skinhead tells him with a grin. "Hell, at the end." That hell we never see, yet it's within probability that Johnson will some day starve to death, rifle frozen in his grasp, like Hatchet Jack whom he finds in the snow at the beginning of his ordeal, "sound of mind but with broke legs." His earliest mentor, the old grizzly-hunter, divines as much; gazing at his former apprentice with something like awe, he takes his perhaps final leave of Johnson with gentle courtesy and admiration. "You've done right well to keep so much hair when so many are after it . . . I hope you fare well!"

Pollack is generous to his actors, giving them time to breathe and to brood on who they are before they speak or keep counsel. Never for a moment do you fret to have anyone else in the principal roles. Geer and Gierasch *define* themselves. Robert Redford (Johnson) is a nice unassuming actor who keeps out of his own way; even at his grimmest he exudes an air of untainted decency. And Pollack's camera gets under the hide of the scenery. The standard features, as a rule pictorial merely, are transmuted by an eye that sees them as for the last time before they vanish into the unusable past: sandstone temples reflected in tree-green water; the packed broomy texture of first growth on a snowy mountainside; men and horses seen through a screen of camp-fire smoke; long afternoon shadows turning the snow blue . . . I *loved* this movie.

I'd like to be able to introduce John Boorman's *Deliverance* as having the last confident word on the subject of the pioneer reprise. The last *dirty* word it does have but I'm not convinced it expresses adequately all those big anti-Rousseau ideas it was hopefully expected to insinuate: the end of the line; Jeremiah Johnson plowed under; the degeneration of the American type and the American Outdoor dream—or You Can't Go Home Again. Trying to identify the film for an American friend over the telephone, I said, "You know, it's the one about these chaps who go down an unexplored river and get raped or drowned." "Don't we all!" he parried succinctly. Well, I didn't think that the characters in the film (I haven't read James Dickey's book) lived up to the pregnant generalization. They

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were too gross and outlandish to carry the weight of symbolizing Modern Man. Elsewhere than on that river, I don't want to imagine their existence. Two were goofs, one was a boob and the archer was certainly a freak. (If *anyone* was dressed for rape, it was Burt Reynolds!) Their language was filthy and in any case unintelligible; this didn't function as in *Fat City,* to characterize essences; it simply classified them as slobs and, for my part, detracted from the complete sympathy for their physical plight which should have been making my mouth dry and my bowels nervous. I could have done without the family-circle stuff, too: all that *quatsch* before they reconsign Drew (the guitarist) to the bottom of the river—he was a *swell* hubby and a *great* father to his kids!—and I thought the editing of the terminal episodes was a total mess. Boorman shot the rapids more efficiently than he shot the script, and if Dickey was responsible for the "screen treatment" he'd better pick up his fat cheques and go back to writing poems. I'd have closed the thing down at the point where Ed and his chubby chum, with Lewis groaning on the floor of the canoe, make up the story they're going to tell, hoping it will stick, and start off on the last blue-water stretch, Ed saying ominously, "We're not out of it yet!"—and leave the aftermath to imagination.

The river location had a spooky grandeur, the *production* management was impressive (the rock-scaling and the canoe expertise); the sodomists in the forest were such stuff as Grimm dreams are made on—and that's a built-in suppression of American film-making. While the monsters and hoodlums are normally authentic, the straight men are depicted as philistines, bums or citizens in a state of intellectually arrested development.

I have insufficient space for reviewing at length a Bulgarian film, *The Goat Horn* (1971; directed by Metodi Andonov). Suffice it to say that it's the genuine article, with dark and violent elements common to the films here reviewed—including a funeral pyre. A shepherd, aided by his daughter, attempts to avenge the rape-murder of his wife by Turkish janissaries (the period is of a century ago). The atmosphere of brutal determination, remote custom, fatality emerging from an initial evil, is directly reminiscent of *The Bandits of Orgosolo* or *The Virgin Spring*. Photographed authoritatively in a nervous camera style, acted with forthright devotion, *The Goat Horn* is the first important film from Bulgaria since *The Peach Thief* of 1964.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

The Kandinsky Paradox

Because Kandinsky occupies a particularly prominent place in the development of twentieth-century painting there has been an unspoken tendency to assume that his is an art of the first quality. If not ranked with the work of masters such as Matisse, it is tacitly presumed to occupy a place among the output of the major painters not much below the top level. It is, therefore, something of a shock to review a sizable and representative selection of his work and to realize that if Kandinsky was perhaps the most powerful and daring intellect among the artists of the last seventy-five years he was far from being possessed of a strong pictorial sensibility. Put more simply, he was a great theoretician, and perhaps on that account a great artist, but by no means a great painter. Apart from more specific problems, which an investigation of his development will make apparent, Kandinsky's work suffers from a pervading dryness which consistently keeps it from being a rich visual experience however much it may offer to the analytical mind.

During the early years of his career, until about 1908, Kandinsky's work seems largely to have been composed of modest essays in painting and printmaking. The small oil sketches of these years are fresh and vigorous, executed in a variety of Impressionist technique that depends on high-keyed color broadly applied, sometimes over a neutral-colored support that is allowed to furnish broad background areas against which the lighter and darker paint tonalities stand out. The prints, largely woodcuts which enforce a certain breadth of touch, exploit an all-over patterning which depends on extreme value contrast and has affinities with a type of Art Nouveau decorative patterning. The discreteness of the elements in these prints, both the represented elements and the lines used to define them, parallels the discreteness of the strokes in the oil sketches. Paradigmatic of Kandinsky's technique during these early years, and a small masterpiece of the period, is the tempera *Market Place in Tunis* of 1904-05. The tempera is used in a granular, flat way like pastel and, like pastel, each stroke defines form not by outlining it but by creating or helping to create it. Starting with a deep-toned brown paper, Kandinsky works up to increasingly light tonalities, carefully balancing colors and tones so that a brilliant overall pattern emerges, and leaving enough of his paper unworked to allow the composition to breathe. If the resulting statement is a modest one, it is both charming and without weakness, evidencing distinctly what were to remain the artist's principal abilities.

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By 1908 Kandinsky, perhaps led on to larger scale by the overall effects with which he worked, was attempting more ambitious work. *Blue Mountain* of that year declares his interest in major painting, at once clearly demonstrating how thoroughly such an interest undermined his pictorial strengths. The most apparent of the picture's weaknesses is its coloristic vulgarity, a vulgarity not contributory to the artistic statement as with Fauve painting but detrimental to it. This vulgarity, and an inability to control his color and make it work for his compositions, was to plague Kandinsky all his life. In *Blue Mountain* one has only to consider how the mustard yellow sun at the center of the composition is modulated through sour green and blue to the pink sky and the dark blue mountain to understand with what little suavity Kandinsky approached his problem. To keep color from running away from him and to unify his composition, which tends toward large pictorial scale at the top and toward smaller figural scale at the bottom, the artist has resorted to black, partly as outlining but principally as overall stippling. The armature thus created does help hold things together, but there remains a slightly frantic quality about the effort to master complex painterly techniques that is made all the more poignant by the figure at the lower right, rapidly brushed in flat, distinct color areas in what is clearly a style more sympathetic to Kandinsky.

In the following year—1909—Kandinsky attempted a large French-type figure composition in the frieze-like *Crinolines.* Although its unsubtle color modulations work against it, as with *Blue Mountain,* the intensity of hue and obviousness of facture help hold it to the surface, an important strength of Kandinsky's since his first woodcut illustrations. In *Crinolines* black and its equivalent (dark blue and green) are relegated entirely to outline, containing some of the color areas and thereby strengthening the composition. In a not dissimilar picture of two years later, *Pastorale,* Kandinsky eliminated black altogether, a daring move which, however, weakened the total composition. Anti-atmospheric because of the density of its color, *Pastorale* is also anti-structural because of the suppression of outline and the simplification of value contrast. Nothing illustrates as well as the progression from *Crinolines* to *Pastorale* Kandinsky's basic artistic courage, not to say abandon, nor the difficulty he had manipulating and controlling the painterly means bodying forth that courage. On the one hand, he tried to create a major figure composition and to control its intense color with outline, while simultaneously modulating his color and dispersing his tonalities so as to work against the outline. On the other, he dispensed with outline altogether, letting his color float free but contradicting the implied opening of the composition with dense, saturated color and obvious facture. One almost feels that Kandinsky's ambitions to be a painter (in the traditional sense)

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and to be an artist (in the modernist sense) worked directly against each other.

Between about 1910 and about 1920 Kandinsky created the abstract pictures on which his reputation has most securely rested—large, complex compositions which are at once his most famous and his least realized works. By freeing both color and line from their attachment to represented objects, as well as to each other, Kandinsky burst the bonds of traditional painting in one heroic effort. The pictorial solutions he thus envisaged were infinitely more advanced than those of Cubism, which was bridging the gap between representation and abstraction less chaotically and, perhaps for that reason, more productively in an historic sense. Kandinsky's production during this decade reached a frenzied peak about 1915 in paintings so intellectually complex that it is even now difficult to grasp them, paintings so visually out of control that they resist every effort at analysis. Black line, most often freed from its bounding functions, becomes increasingly irregular and fantastic. Color, always Kandinsky's weakest point, continues to fall into vulgarity or muddiness, and coloristic and tonal modulations often seem wholly capricious. Because Kandinsky had not developed a firmly-rooted sense of scale neither his color nor his line were sufficiently in control in these early abstractions to carry the pictorial burden placed upon them, and in some inexplicable way he used them both as if he were painting representational pictures, although all references to nature were swept away. The uncontrolled result is, to paraphrase Clement Greenberg, a kind of homeless non-representation, a series of pictorial elements apparently unable to coalesce into a harmonious and meaningful totality. The importance of these large canvases is almost entirely in what they stand for and not in what they are.

Great Fugue of 1914 is typical of both the achievements and failures of the pictures of this time. One glance is sufficient to show the number of elements Kandinsky was juggling and the difficulty he had in resolving them. The congestion at the top center shows both his problems in passing from figural scale to pictorial scale and the multiplicity of shapes and elements with which he was trying to cope. Although carefully organized, the picture is understructured, just as later pictures were to be overstructured. Neither color, line, nor scale provide a scaffolding on which it can hang and one senses the pictorial elements working against Kandinsky rather than with him. Spatially, the painting is particularly awkward. Although Kandinsky was always better using dense, nonspatial effects, he seems to have felt the need to "space-up" his pictures as they opened into broad, abstract compositions. He did this either with linear diagonals or, as in *Great Fugue*, by lighten-

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ing and modulating his color (in this case, toward the bottom of the canvas). The result is a further sense of awkwardness and of devices working against their creator. Elements that could register more strongly, such as the ladder image at the lower left that was to come back in future works, are not sufficiently isolated to have their full effect. What one notices most of all, however, is the growing sense of fantasy, a fantasy related to the handling of non-representational elements as if they were representational. Although line is no longer a boundary and color no longer an attribute, both continue to behave as if they were boundary and attribute respectively. One somehow expects a recognizable image to coalesce out of the chaos at any minute. Since Kandinsky's was a fantasy evidenced in a kind of overgrown doodling, one based on innerness, it was a fantasy that lent itself only with difficulty to a large pictorial conception, and the conflict between the size of pictures such as *Great Fugue* and their fussy execution merely adds to the confusion about their ultimate pictorial meaning.

By 1920 Kandinsky's awareness of Cubism seems to have helped him in finding a structural scaffolding and in controlling his pictorial space. In pictures such as *Red Oval* the represented elements are reduced in number, regularized in shape, and drawn toward the center of the composition. The background, in turn, is painted in—in this case in green—bringing it forward and thereby making the picture both denser and stronger. A rectangular yellow shape modulates between that background and the cluster of freer shapes seen against it. Spatially, the forms overlap in a combination of analytic and synthetic Cubist effects. In some places, Kandinsky has made his tendency to modulate color work for him by modulating only at the edge of forms in an analytical Cubist way, indicating shapes shading into one another or receding behind one another. In others, he has lapped solid forms so as to reduce them to thin planes lying on top of one another, and he holds the yellow plane down with the stippled rainbow-like shape at the right, which comes from behind the yellow shape to lie on top of it. In sum, by the early '20's he was beginning to create less adventurous, less important, and less chaotic canvases in favor of pictures that were more comprehensible, more thoroughly an expression of his own pictorial talents, and more successful within the terms they set for themselves.

If Cubism first suggested to Kandinsky a means of controlling his compositions, it was the Bauhaus and Constructivism that gave him an organizational method to make them fully comprehensible and Paul Klee who pointed the way toward a more meaningful scale and use of fantasy. Neither of these influences was able wholly to improve his color sense (see *Tempered Pink* of 1936), nor was the former able to ameliorate his enthusiastic tendency to push what he

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did beyond the limits within which he was able to do it meaningfully (his Constructivist pictures became rigidly over-geometricized as his earlier pictures had become over-chaotic), but both helped guide him toward a more realistic personal style. *On Gray* of 1923 is one of the early fruits of his study of Constructivism. In it, his earlier confused cosmogenies take on comprehensible shape. Color modulations are suppressed in favor of the clearly-defined shapes which Kandinsky always handled most easily. Although most of these shapes gather in toward the center, many are allowed to wander to the periphery of the canvas, re-establishing the kind of all-over patterning that was also apparently native and sympathetic to the artist. Color once again becomes associated with particular forms—becomes a meaningful attribute—and black again serves its linear function, sometimes thickening into more substantial shapes. The diagonals which earlier had suggested space now lie flat on the surface, the longer ones stretched like taut strings between the corners of the canvas, pulling the other elements up to them. During the '20's and '30's this tendency toward simplification of form continued, largely under Klee's influence, until there accumulated a group of small-scale works, looking very much like Klee's watercolors, in which Kandinsky was able to realize his pictorial talents as successfully as in the *Market Place in Tunis* of a quarter-century earlier. In these works, geometricized shapes—often denotative (figures, arrows, pyramids)—float free against a simplified background. Although this background is sometimes stippled it never becomes wholly atmospheric, to the ultimate benefit of the compositions concerned. Frequently, and happily, compositions are organized to reflect the format of the canvas or paper on which they are created—vertical arrangements on vertical supports, more spread-out compositions on horizontal supports. *Pronounced Rose* of 1932 is a paradigm of this kind of picture, and among the most successful of the works of the period. In it, the discrete and carefully-delineated shapes call contrapuntally to one another across the surface of the canvas in a lively, staccato rhythm. The background is, to all intents and purposes, a single color field and other colors are relegated to a few clearly-outlined shapes. All are flat and unmodulated. There is almost no attempt to create space, the slight halations surrounding each shape as modulating or atmosphere-creating devices being so close in hue and value to the background as hardly to be visible at all. This kind of pulsing pattern, which Mondrian was to attempt in different ways ten years later, finally delivered into Kandinsky's hands an instrument for combining the successful patterning of his early illustrations with wholly abstract configurations, and he continued to play variations on it until his death.

Kandinsky's late pictures, deeply indebted to Klee at a moment when Klee was moving away from the effects they employed toward

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a more monumental art, legitimized both his pictorial strengths and the increasingly strong strain of fantasy in his images. The intricacy and delicacy of their images demand that they be read rather than seen at once, and the small scale at which Kandinsky worked increases that necessity. Larger works now became simply smaller ones enlarged, rather than larger-scaled conceptions. Those pictures with the greatest value contrast between the forms and the ground, and the greatest discreteness of shape, were the best. Compositions in which shapes overlapped, ran off the canvas, or were entirely bounded by other shapes tended toward weakness. Kandinsky once again used toned papers to good effect, and sometimes refined the push-pull surface tension of his pictures by using a dark-valued image against a light-valued ground. This device made the ground seem visually on top of the image, and to suppress the resulting hole-like effect Kandinsky drew on top of the image in such a way as to bring it up to the surface. In general, he moved steadily toward a more modest art in which he could more fully realize his pictorial talents. If the dryness of his pictures persisted, it increasingly became a dryness that was used to positive effect, and if his art became less ambitious—less important—it became simultaneously more realized and truer to what seems the artist's own sensibility.

Reviewing Kandinsky's work, one is constantly made aware that his pictorial sensibilities were essentially those of an illustrator, most at home in small-scaled images created out of flat colors and shapes arranged as punctuation across a page. Informed with a quality of fantasy uniquely Kandinsky's, these images require careful reading —travelling through—to be fully comprehended. Ultimately the sensibility that created them undermined every effort on the artist's part to develop a major painterly statement. By contrast, one cannot but be awed by Kandinsky's tremendous intellectual stature. Precisely in his least successful pictures, those of 1910-1915, his grasp of where painting was going and his willingness to pursue the implications of that tendency to their limits become most apparent. It is ultimately upon the comprehensiveness of that grasp and the daring of that pursuit that Kandinsky's claims to greatness must rest.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

THE 1972 PART OF THE 1972-73 NEW YORK drama season has shown greater than usual diversity, which did not, however, prevent the quality from being as humdrum as ever. Let us examine this time the offerings of one of the two main institutional theaters, Jules Irving's Lincoln Center Repertory Company.

By far the most important and interesting event was the quartet of short Samuel Beckett plays at Lincoln Center's small, experimental theater, the Forum. The plays themselves were, unhappily, overshadowed by the announcement that Jules Irving had resigned over the fact that the executive board could not raise enough money to keep the Forum running beyond this Beckett mini-festival, and that funds for the main stage, the Vivian Beaumont, had become mighty scarce as well. Irving has done a middling job artistically, but as an administrator he showed considerable canniness and resiliency in keeping the drama alive at Lincoln Center, where other art forms, having more snob value, are allowed to lose money hand over fist, but the Vivian Beaumont and Forum are expected to be somehow self-supporting. So, even without being a great admirer of most of Irving's productions, indeed disapproving of many of his selections, I still had to acknowledge his ability to survive decently under highly adverse conditions. I wonder if his successor, as yet unchosen, will do even that well.

To get back to Beckett, however. There were two double bills: *Happy Days* and *Act Without Words 1* alternating with *Krapp's Last Tape* and a world premiere, *Not I*. Both evenings were directed satisfactorily by Alan Schneider, and the performers were the acting couple Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy. The best play of the four, surely, is *Happy Days,* which becomes brighter and sharper—more touching, hilarious and essential—with every viewing. Its heroine, Winnie, is, among all Beckett's dramatic creations, the most winning loser: the most patiently suffering, the most cheerful amid the adversity in which she is literally buried. Yet in her good-natured adaptability—the sweetness with which she endures, the absurd gratitude she exudes—lies the horrible irony of the play, so that we have the potent paradox of a jollity that breaks our hearts. With her almost completely senile husband barely within sight and, given his failing senses, only occasionally within hearing, she is about as isolated, as immobilized, and as stoical as the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus. Although no vulture feeds on her liver, the alarm clock of time—or mortality—harries her with its strident commands to wake or sleep: to be human, and so the atrophying

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victim of transience. Lear, off to prison with his beloved daughter, exults, "We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage"; Winnie actually does sing The Merry Widow Waltz. "What a curse, mobility!" she will exclaim as she watches her Willie creep back into his hole; encouragingly, she comments, "I know it is not easy, dear, crawling backwards, but it is rewarding in the end." This is the kind of joke about which one does not know whether to laugh or weep; but, in the end, one laughs. Just as Winnie and Willie laugh at the fact that in this sun-lashed desert of theirs an ant still lays eggs. Asks Winnie: "How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones?"

If it is woman's supreme virtue to endure with dignity, to improvise little happinesses out of incidentals and leftovers, man, who, like Krapp, turns bitter, must seek crepuscular satisfaction in his creative memory. Memory recorded on tape, for man is an artificer; and memory relived in the mind, for he is also a cogitator. Of course, Winnie, too, remembers; but memory, to her, is just a pastime, a source of a little pride—*amour-propre*. To Krapp, memory is everything, except for the piddling necessities of food and drink, which one can elevate, by desperate stratagems, into minor pleasures. But memory is the living past, to be argued with, deplored or endorsed, chewed over and added to, ransacked for whatever might justify the ignominy of having to go on living. Winnie's memory is an album to flip through; Krapp's is Proustian and reconstructs a past whose few choice incidents, culminating in an erotic climax, glow on inextinguishably. Remembering is glory and pain, but not entertainment. He, too, sings—an old hymn that doesn't do much for him now; recalls his authorship, which gained him no money and scant recognition, and is no help either; but the memory of idyllic intercourse in a softly swaying boat, that is the viaticum for the journey through life, and the last viaticum for the journey into death.

Hume Cronyn was a fine Krapp, uncoy and unlovable in his old, corporeal presence, in which he gave out with some of the best stage wheezing I ever heard: a wheeze almost good enough for a death rattle. But on tape, the middle-aged Krapp's voice was dripping with bland satisfaction, very much the "stupid bastard," as the old Krapp comments, "I took myself to be." What a magnificent phrase: "the stupid bastard I took myself to be." It is bad enough to *be* a stupid bastard, but proudly to *imagine* oneself being one is doubly stupid. As a result of Cronyn's uningratiating interpretation, the sadness we felt in the midst of this comedy was not for an individual but for old age itself: for transitoriness, mortality, and the Pyrrhic victory that recording a life, on tape or in the memory, represents.

Jessica Tandy was less successful with Winnie. Miss Tandy has a theatrical quality, a larger-than-lifesizeness achieved partly by

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looking too studiedly lovely for her age (and, in this case, for her role), partly by having a diction that smacks of the elocution teacher resolutely addressing some particularly backward pupils, and partly by having a certain aristocratic *hauteur* that is really too good, too special for Winnie. Ruth White, who created the part at the New York world premiere, was better, though she may have gone a little too far in the other direction, giving us a Winnie a shade more doltish and blithering than called for. Perfection, for me, was achieved by the French Winnie of Madeleine Renaud, one of my greatest theatergoing experiences. Mme Renaud played her as somewhat lightheaded, frivolous but gallant—in the manner, say, of Yvonne Printemps in something like *Les trois Valses*—which made it all the more heart-rending to see such a wispy, airy creature the victim of creeping earthboundness. But, to our exhilaration, Mme Renaud seemed to float like a balloon above the string that tied her to mortality.

Beckett's greatness, as has often been noted, lies in his ability to get down to the essentials of unaccommodated man, the bare, forked animal. But Jan Kott is, as usual, wrong when he sees *King Lear* as an adumbration of *Endgame;* that is putting a kind of inverse Cartesianism before horse sense. It is the other way round: it is Beckett who approximates *Lear* in that he manages to invest his gallows humor and *reductio ad absurdum* with such a passion and verbal felicity that his sarcastic, fanatically prosaic, quintessential prose becomes a kind of poetry against the grain. When Krapp reflects on his literary achievement, "Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries beyond the seas. Getting known," the sneer is, first of all, autobiographical. It mocks Beckett's transatlantic success, the academic snob appeal of his work which, ironically, led to those twin peaks: inclusion of a wordless scene in *Oh! Calcutta!* and the Nobel Prize for Literature—two accolades Beckett did not so much accept as endure. But there is also something wildly poetic about those absurd figures, 17 and 11, and that marvelously wry, ludicrous conclusion, "getting known."

Yet Beckett will go too far—which, in his case, amounts to not going far enough. In *Act Without Words I* he returns to pantomime, which, for someone who can turn the rags of near-monosyllabic verbiage into a glittering panoply, is a lamentable abdication. In the new play, *Not I,* words are, to be sure, preserved, but everything else is—equally disastrously—jettisoned. The play begins with mutterings in pitch darkness, whereupon the lights go up on a mouth surrounded by blackness: a disembodied female mouth that splashes us with an uninterrupted fifteen-minute stream of words. At some distance from the Mouth stands a tall, faintly lit, shrouded figure, designated as the Auditor "on invisible podium about four feet high," intently listening to the Mouth.

The Mouth pours out in fragments the miserable life story of a

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woman who was conceived, born and made to live without love and, largely, without speech. So we get the paradox of a speechless life splattered out in an unquenchable monologue to someone who seems to be the judge of the dead. The Mouth tells of various quasi-incidents in that near-eventless life, sequestered, haunted by a buzzing, prompted to speech only on rare occasions, always in winter. Then the woman would spout forth her story to unheeding strangers, only to crawl back, abashed, into her hole. There is also something about an April morning with larks in the air, when, her face buried in the grass, words first came to this creature; and something about a trial at which she could not speak up in her own defense; and the time when, at Croker's Acres, she sat staring at her hand and, for once in her life, wept. These and a few other minimal events keep tumbling over one another, submerging and resurfacing, always fragmented and only semicomprehensible, in the Mouth's monologue.

Meanwhile the Auditor remains mute and merely shrugs four times, four decreasing shrugs; the first clear and audible as the arms hit the thighs, the last barely perceptible. These shrugs occur at times when the Mouth becomes flustered in its recitation and stammers the identical sequence of monosyllables: "she— . . what? . . who? . . no . . no! . . she! . . (pause)" after which comes the Auditor's arm movement. The implication is that the Mouth insists on speaking in the third person (not I) about a life that is, in truth, its—her—own. This *mauvais quart d'heure* (in both senses) ends with the Mouth's jabbering swallowed up by darkness, the speaker never having assumed identification with, responsibility for, her life. God (the Auditor?) comes out bad, too; the only time the Mouth laughs is when it mentions God. With characteristic quirkiness, Beckett appends two notes to the typescript of the play. The first is legitimate and describes the Auditor's movements; but the second is a perfect non sequitur and reads *in toto: "Note 2:* 'Any': pronounce 'anny.'" This is not related by asterisk to any (or anny) specific passage of the text, and just hangs there, absurdly, at the end of the typescript.

Such minimalism is not, I believe, to be countenanced from anyone, not even from Beckett. Up to a point, Less may indeed be More; but beyond that point, Less is nothing. It is all very well for Beckett to return the drama to the Aeschylean essentials, but farther back than Aeschylus no one can go: the terrain there is not merely uncharted, it is no longer terrain. Ionesco may be right in his remark to Claude Bonnefoy, "Beckett's plays seem to be moving toward gimmickry. It's as if now he were making concessions to *his* audience, the audience he formed. . . . He's no longer trying to say what he has to say, but to find gimmicks that will leave the audience gasping. . . . It's a permanent succession of daredevil feats." The only act that can follow painting oneself into a corner is disappearance

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into the woodwork. Come back, Sam Beckett! It is not easy crawling backwards, but it is rewarding in the end.

On the main stage, the Lincoln Center Repertory Company began what was to become Jules Irving's last season with Maxim Gorky's *Enemies,* and the irony of it lies in the fact that Ellis Rabb, the guest director, is one of those mentioned as a possible successor to Irving. *Enemies,* finished in exile on Capri in 1906, is a respectable enough play, though it lacks the haunting, perhaps romantic, intensity of *The Lower Depths.* It seems likely that Gorky followed the advice of Chekhov, who admired the work of his junior but found it "somehow uncontrolled and flamboyant." By the time of *Enemies,* Gorky was certainly unflamboyant, but the control, such as it was, was mostly ideological. Even though the play (at least in its first version, as performed here; later, Gorky rewrote it for the worse) is by no means a piece of agit-prop—the bourgeois are drawn with considerable understanding, indeed some sympathy —there is something programmatic and didactic about it, relegating human values to a secondary position. Human interest is there, I repeat, as well as a good grasp of the spectrum of attitudes that characterized the Russia of the aborted revolution of 1905; but the chief characteristic of *Enemies* is its portentousness, beside which all else, unhappily, pales.

We are shown a sort of miniature revolution in a provincial textile factory, owned jointly by the weak-kneed liberal, Zakhar Bardin, and the tough reactionary, Mikhail Skrobotov. When, during an outburst of worker unrest, Skrobotov is shot to death, Bardin tries to placate the workers with various concessions, but a telegram previously dispatched by the dead man brings in the army under the command of the officious and inept Captain Boboyedov of the Gendarmerie or, as the present translators (Kitty Hunter-Blair and Jeremy Brooks) put it, the Security Corps. Leading the investigation, however, is the dead man's brother, the ice-cold Assistant Prosecutor Nikolai Skrobotov. Completing the cast of upper-class characters are Kleopatra, the dead man's wife, now a shrill Fury crying for vengeance, though she used to cheat on her husband profusely; Zakhar's brother, Yakov, an amiable drunkard who has opted out of life; his wife, Tatiana, an actress of some repute, no longer in love with her weak spouse and turned bored dilettante; Paulina, Zakhar's wife, a well-meaning but inflexible woman, decent and unimaginative, to whom Socialists are distant, hardly real bugbears until, to her dismay, she finds out otherwise; General Pechenegov, Bardin's retired, totally right-wing uncle vacationing at the Bardin estate—a foolish man mostly engaged in domineering his luckless old orderly, Kon; and twenty-year-old Nadya, an orphaned niece whom the Bardins have adopted.

Gorky uses these people admirably to show various degrees on the bourgeois-upper-class scale, from the bullying exploitativeness

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of Mikhail and the General to the unthinking support given that attitude by Kleopatra and, to a lesser extent, Paulina; from the lukewarm and ultimately ineffectual liberalism of Zakhar, through what we would now call the radical chic of Yakov and Tatiana, who fence-sittingly flirt with the workers, down to the enthusiastic espousal of the underprivileged by Nadya, whose late mother had herself been impoverished. Among the workers, however, there is nowhere near such variety. There is Levshin, the canny old man who has thought his way through to Socialism but cleverly conceals his true feelings; Sintsov, the clerk, a kind of idealized Gorky-figure, who is really a disguised party organizer come to politicize the workers; Pologgy, a miserable, self-righteous little clerk who turns informer; and, for the rest, faceless good men who, without any false heroics, are the noble forerunners of the Revolution and reek with solidarity and the spirit of self-sacrifice.

A play such as this has no heroes in the strict sense. When, in Act III, the workers appear before an improvised Army tribunal, their behavior is brave but unspectacular, and Tatiana, the theatrical, egocentric but not imperceptive actress, exclaims, "Why do they speak so simply, look at things so simply . . . and suffer? Why? Do they have no passion in them, no heroism?" The play certainly lacks heroes even in the technical sense of the word, and here the observation of Berthold Viertel, the German director-critic, is relevant: "The theme of the Russian theater was not the hypertrophy of individualism . . . but life, broad and drastic as it is. Life was the protagonist . . . The issue was the question of the individual's rootedness in everyday reality, in the existence of all. . . . The Russian Christ was the populace. And the suffering of the people begat the drama . . ." All very well, but one can also understand Rilke's demurrer after meeting Gorky on Capri shortly after the latter had completed *Enemies*. Much as he was impressed by the Russian, Rilke could not help feeling (as he wrote to Ellen Key) that "the revolutionary is a contradiction both of the poet and of the Russian; the one and the other have so many reasons for the inward refusal of revolutions, nothing is more important to them than patience . . ."

True enough, the characters in *Enemies* are not patiently, fully developed; perhaps, in fact, there are too many of them for anyone but a supreme dramatic genius to do justice to all in such short space. But there are further difficulties: for Gorky, the workers have to be absolutely right, the factory owners basically wrong—which means that the more educated, articulate, psychologically complex people have to be, essentially, villains. Thus Nikolai, the Assistant Prosecutor, is a demon of unfeeling lucidity, just barely tempted from his dogged persecution of the workers by the actress's flesh; the seeming decency of Zakhar has to become tantamount to weakness and opportunistic willingness to make small concessions to fore-

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stall greater losses—eagerness to shore up exploitation by means of piddling compromise. Nadya, the young idealist who, presumably, will become a Socialist, is shown as a zealous innocent, rightly but ineffectually sympathetic to the workers—a character who would become interesting only during an actual Revolution, when she would probably be caught between two grindstones. Sintsov, the organizer, could have been fascinating, but Gorky lets him get lost in the shuffle.

That leaves us, as the most dramatically viable characters, the couple, Yakov and Tatiana. An ironical wastrel, a boozing, quipping fifth wheel, Yakov betrays the factory owners' stratagems to the workers. He does this partly to ingratiate himself with a new group of people, and partly out of boredom with and spite against the old; but the workers' cause is of little interest to him compared to his mesmerized preoccupation with the crumbling of his marriage. Tatiana is likewise bored with her life—even, it would seem, with the stage—but she may get some pleasure from enacting the cynical teller-off of other people, the morally superior speaker of harsh truths. She is attracted to Sintsov and fairly openly flirts with him, but will not go any farther; she will not even hide evidence that is sure to incriminate him, though she could do this with impunity. Later, she toys with the notion of sleeping with Nikolai in exchange for Sintsov's freedom, but this, too, is beyond her: she remains an alert, observant but selfish dilettante. She and Yakov are well matched, in fact, except that she continues to function, however barrenly, while he merely deteriorates.

These two (along, perhaps, with Nadya) are the play's most Chekhovian characters—the most freewheeling and unpredictable, and so the most dramatic. But whereas in Chekhov they would be allowed more limelight—like Masha and Vershinin, or Astrov and Elena—here they remain overshadowed by social events, by the unsuccessful workers' uprising that nevertheless heralds the Revolution. Chekhov, aside from being the greater playwright, was lucky in dying before the age of ideology closed in; even Gorky, in *The Lower Depths,* had partly escaped it; in *Enemies,* despite laudable efforts to the contrary, oversimplification begins to set in. Gorky's characters, moreover, are not so salty, original, pathetically or risibly eccentric, as Chekhov's; the General, who may be the oddest, is still only a prankster and martinet; Pologgy, although related to Chekhov's frustrated whiners, is contemptible rather than pitiable.

Finally, it is Gorky's language and the quality of his invention that are less choice than Chekhov's. Still, there are splendid exceptions. Take Yakov's description of what haunts him even in the midst of his drunkenness: "I can see this face, this broad, unwashed face staring at me with enormous eyes which ask . . . 'Well?' Do you understand? Just one word . . . 'Well?'" Or take the ob-

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servation of Levshin, the old worker sage, "It's the vicious has to be killed. The good ones are no hindrance, they'll die of themselves" —the sort of statement that brilliantly exemplifies what Zakhar fears in the workers when "they look at you with such clear eyes" as if no murder had been committed: "That terrifying simplicity!" Two brief scenes are particularly effective: the one where Tatiana plays with making love to Nikolai to save Sintsov, and Yakov's farewell to his wife, where Tatiana does not grasp that the "anywhere" into which he is going is suicide.

Yet if most of the good bits involve Tatiana, Yakov or both, that is no justification for turning them into the central characters and deflecting the play's socialist realism into bourgeois romanticism. Already the highly successful Royal Shakespeare Company production of the play cheated a little when it added a final offstage pistol shot, providing a neat ending but unduly stressing the importance of Yakov's death. Ellis Rabb's production, however, went immeasurably farther in grotesque wrongheadedness.

Rabb, always more concerned with visual effects than with verbal or psychological accuracy, staged the show so as to put the huge stage of the Vivian Beaumont on pyrotechnical display. In the most intimate scenes, characters were kept at great distances from each other, so that the dialogue should, as it were, crisscross the stage in quaint diagonals. Often several groups of people were relegated to various remote corners of the stage so that meaningful interaction was impossible, and, in general, much more attention was paid to curious entrances and eccentric exits, to odd collapses onto provocatively positioned pieces of furniture and to picturesque bits of ensemble choreography, than to the meanings of the sundry relationships and of the play itself. Perversely ignored was the helpful hint in the use of the very word "enemies," which Paulina first applies to the opposing lower orders, but which Kleopatra then applies to their own class. While the workers know what they want and stick together, "we," she says, "*we* live like enemies, believing in nothing, bound together by nothing, each for himself."

Instead of concentrating on establishing this distinction, Rabb devised pretty tableaus to make us view the drifting, doomed upper classes with exquisite melancholy. For this purpose he mobilized the Beaumont's revolving stage, so that Act II ended not, as in the text, with Levshin's exhortation to a fellow worker to "hurry up and get things straight," but with the turntable revolving from the garden to the interior of the Bardin house, where Mikhail's coffin stood mournfully surrounded by guttering candles. Needless to say, no such coffin figures in Gorky's script. But the worst *contresens* was the second turning of the stage at the end of the third and final act. Here we are supposed to be left with the frightening image of the brave workers having bags put over their heads by the

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soldiery to cut off their quiet professions of faith (this is, actually, taken over from Gorky's own 1933 revision of the text, which the English adapters have permissibly added to what is otherwise the superior 1906 version). Nadya cries out at both soldiers and fellow bourgeois, "It's you—you—you're the criminals," and Levshin adds that the killer is he who implants the bitterness. Instead of this, Rabb gave us an offstage shot followed by the turntable's slow revolution (quite the wrong sort, that!) bringing us back into the garden. We saw, downstage center, Yakov's body elegantly dead on a lounge chair, with a clean handkerchief daintily covering the bullet-shattered head. Not a drop of blood on either the pure white hankie or on Yakov's immaculate white suit; we were, furthermore, to assume that the gallant and decorous suicide had, after shooting himself through the temple, considerately covered up the offending sight. Meanwhile the entire cast—soldiers, workers, bourgeois—slowly filtered into the garden, ending up huddled together in an awe-struck tableau as the lights achingly dimmed.

Now this is vulgar nonsense. The implication is, first, that this socially useless tippler is Gorky's tragic hero, that his suicide somehow epitomizes the perhaps inevitable but nevertheless profoundly sad passing of an era of gracious living; and, secondly, that there was something so exaltedly heroic about this gesture that, for its sake, the bagging of prisoners had to be dropped so that all characters, regardless of class and persuasion, could be revealed paying silent homage to the departed. Nothing could be farther from the playwright's intentions; nevertheless Clive Barnes of the *Times,* that choragus of the chorus of raving reviewers, was to comment about those plays by Chekhov and Gorky that end with pistol shots—as if *Enemies* were some sort of *Sea Gull* or *Ivanov.*

With the casting, Rabb did no better than with the staging, though here there were extenuating circumstances. He was more or less obliged to recruit a motley cast from the ranks of the Repertory regulars augmented by members of his own, once flourishing APA repertory group, adding also members of other provincial reps as well as Broadway, Hollywood and Jewish Art Theater veterans. Small wonder that these disparate elements refused to coalesce, especially since some of them are pretty rotten actors to begin with. Exception must be made, however, of Nancy Marchand's Tatiana, Frances Sternhagen's Paulina, Susan Sharkey's Nadya and Philip Bosco's Mikhail, though even these performances were commendable rather than memorable. Douglas W. Schmidt's scenery was, as always, both appropriate and imaginative; Ann Roth's costumes were pleasing and, for all I know, authentic; and John Gleason contributed consistently evocative lighting.

Things were no better over in Joseph Papp's camp, but I shall report on them next time.

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Reviews

RICHARD PEVEAR

Poetry Chronicle[1]

I

TWO BOOKS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED to celebrate Hugh MacDiarmid's eightieth birthday (1972): *The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology* (a selection of poems), and *Lucky Poet,* MacDiarmid's "self-study in literature and political ideas," which was first published in 1943 and has been out of print and hard to find for a long time. MacDiarmid has always had trouble getting his work printed, or getting it printed in full and as he wrote it. Some of his long poems have appeared only in fragments, and some have never appeared. He did not acquire his reputation early, and it is still contested. But the publication of these two books is an indication that he has prevailed.

MacDiarmid belongs, with Pound, Joyce, Eliot, to the great beginning of the modern movement. But the lines of that movement were mapped out some time ago, its tendencies and achievements fixed, excluding MacDiarmid. (As William Carlos Williams has often been excluded or undervalued, and I think for the same reasons; Williams has much in common with MacDiarmid.) For one thing, this situation bears out MacDiarmid's own observations about the general ignorance of Scottish culture and its virtual nonexistence in the world. More than that, it shows that in important ways MacDiarmid differed from his fellow modernists, and that his differences aligned him with the future, with struggles which he made central to his life and work but which had not yet appeared to

1 THE HUGH MACDIARMID ANTHOLOGY, ed. by Michael Grieve and Alexander Scott. Routledge and Kegan Paul. $10.50. LUCKY POET, by *Hugh MacDiarmid.* University of California Press. $12.95. SPLENDOR AND DEATH OF JOAQUIN MURIETA, by *Pablo Neruda;* tr. by Ben Belitt. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $7.95, $2.95. THE CAPTAIN'S VERSE, by *Pablo Neruda;* tr. by Donald D. Walsh. New Directions. $7.50, $1.95. POEMS FROM THREE DECADES, by *Richmond Lattimore.* Charles Scribner's. $7.95. AFTER BORGES, by *R. H. W. Dillard.* Louisiana State University Press. $4.95. FOOTPRINTS, by *Denise Levertov.* New Directions. $5.00. BRAVING THE ELEMENTS, by *James Merrill.* Atheneum. $5.95. POEMS OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, tr. by Willis Barnstone. New Directions. $2.45. SELECTED POEMS, by *Pierre Reverdy;* tr. by Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions. $2.25. WINTER TREES, by *Sylvia Plath.* Harper & Row. $5.95. THE VOICE OF THINGS, by *Francis Ponge;* tr. by Beth Archer. McGraw-Hill. $5.95. CARGO, by *Paul Nelson.* The Stonewall Press, The Seamark Press. n.p. RED OWL, by *Robert Morgan.* W. W. Norton. $6.95; $1.95. COLLECTED POEMS 1951-1971, by *A. R. Ammons.* W. W. Norton. $12.50.

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be central to modernism. He now speaks with clarifying force on precisely the issues about which men like Pound, Yeats, Eliot, and Lawrence were most confused and untrustworthy. MacDiarmid is the one major poet in our language (or near it) who has been constantly, authentically, and actively allied with the political Left. It is the struggle to achieve this position, the depth of his grasp of its implications, and finally the richness he brought to it that are described in *Lucky Poet* and embodied in this *Anthology* of his poetry.

The *Anthology* begins with a memoir by the poet's son, Michael Grieve, one of its editors, describing MacDiarmid's life on the island of Whalsay in the Shetlands, "a self-induced Scottish Siberia that allowed no compromise. . . ." MacDiarmid himself begins *Lucky Poet* with an account of his place and life on the island and of the circumstances that brought him there. These are the living conditions out of which the book is spoken; not only a biographical fact, but the "ground" he stands on, which is, among other things, real ground, as it is celebrated in so many of his poems. For MacDiarmid a spring of water is also an *Ur-sprung,* and the real ground of Whalsay is also an *Ur-grund.* As one reviewer of his book, *The Islands of Scotland,* put it: "His concern is indeed not so much with topography, as with the human element and its fashioning by island life." In the preface to *Lucky Poet,* MacDiarmid says:

> My insistence upon a poetry of fact and of thought in this book agrees with Ouspensky's contention that "one of the main barriers preventing us from waking up is our imagination, which intrudes constantly into our thought. Imagination runs away with us. We are only rarely able to think beyond a certain point, and this point is very soon reached. Our thoughts are then taken over by our imagination, which runs amuck with them, without direction, aim, or control. We can only stop the wasteful chase of our imagination by being attentive. The moment we are attentive the activities of our imagination cease, and thought can come into action. Imagination is a very violent destructor of energy; mental effort on the other hand stores energy."

A statement which I consider of such importance that it should be taken as the epigraph of this review.

Lucky Poet is in fact a great collection of quotations. This will probably be taken as a sign of unoriginality. But Osip Mandelstam suggests another way of looking at it in his essay "Talking about Dante" (translation published in the magazine *Delos,* vol. 6, 1971): "A quotation is not an excerpt. It is a cicada. It is part of its nature never to quiet down. Once having got hold of the air, it does not release it. Erudition is far from the same thing as the keyboard of allusions, which is the main essence of an education."

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MacDiarmid says of himself, "I am a Communist, but *in excelsis*. . . ." He also says, "I am a Communist, a Scottish separatist, and republican." Both statements suggest his impatience with any form of dogmatism. As a matter of fact he has been expelled from the Scottish Nationalist Party and from the British Communist Party, more than once. He is for the working class and was born into it, but he is also in his own words a "high-brow," an intellectual, a writer of "difficult poetry," and he deplores "the philistinism of most of my fellow Communists." He is a national poet, self-appointed; but he has never limited himself to national subjects, and is apt to do so least when he is writing about Scotland; and he is incapable of propaganda. If we consider how often Communists lack culture, intellectuals lack any notion of the just place of labor in human society, internationalists lack an understanding of place and native quality, nationalists lack openmindedness, materialists deny the spirit and spiritualists deny matter, we may realize that MacDiarmid has written and acted with great awareness, thoroughness, and rightness in bringing these fragmentary views together into the "seamless garment" of his vision. He says in *Lucky Poet:*

> A bird's-eye view of the psychology of distinguished Scotsmen throughout the whole of our history shows how the "extraordinary contradictions of character, most dangerous antinomies and antithetical impulses" all of them, without exception, manifested, make the incredible psychological background (as wild and little-known and avoided except in fair weather by the few who ever visit it at all as the Hebrides-Orkney-Shetland-Faroe area accepted as the theatre of this volume) to the almost uniformly dull and common-sensible collection of appalling buddies that constitute our Anglicized Scottish nation today.

In a similar, and related, way he sees the buried life of Scotland, its Celtic past, its musical language, its unique spirit, betrayed by its Anglicized, mercantile, modern civilization. If you think of your own idea of Scotland, you will see his point. The Scottish people have been uprooted by their union with England and by the dominating force of English "finance imperialism." MacDiarmid's study of the effects of uprootedness is as passionate, as indignant, and as sensitive to thwarted possibilities as Simone Weil's, and the image of Scotland in his mind ("the tragedy of an unevolved people" he says in "The Glen of Silence") bears a strong resemblance to Simone Weil's image of "the lands below the Loire" whose culture was destroyed in its flower by the French under Simon de Montfort. Today there is a separatist movement in the Languedoc region, as there are separatist movements in Scotland, Wales, Québec, Brittany, Yugoslavia, and potentially, according to Andrei Amalrik, in

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Russia; the Czechoslovakian reform was a movement of national separation, and so is the movement the United States has opposed in Vietnam. MacDiarmid was one of the founders of the separatist movement in Scotland, and as a radical thinker he has never lost sight of what true revolutions are fought for:

> It is good that the voice of the indigent,
> Too long stifled, should manage
> To make itself heard.
> But I cannot consent to listen
> To nothing but that voice.
> Man does not cease to interest me
> When he ceases to be miserable.
> Quite the contrary!
> That it is important to aid him
> In the beginning goes without saying,
> Like a plant it is essential
> To water at first,
> But this is in order to get it to flower
> And I *am concerned with the blossom.*

The struggle of national separatism, against the power of the industrial State, is as profound, rich, and desperate as the struggle for a new poetic vision. It is MacDiarmid's gift to have recognized that they are essentially the same struggle. I believe that this is the very heart of what we are living through, that the political cause can only succeed through an alliance with poetry, and that of all poets MacDiarmid is the one who has most fully realized this. In "Second Hymn to Lenin" he says:

> Ah, Lenin, you were richt. But I'm a poet
> (And you c'ud mak allowances for that!)
> Aimin' at mair than you aimed at
> Tho' yours comes first, I know it.

Of American writers I think the one closest to MacDiarmid in this respect was Randolph Bourne, who died in 1918 at the age of thirty-two. Bourne styled himself a "literary radical" and combined in his critical writings the strongest condemnation of the "State myth" with a vision of a "trans-national America" in which our own peculiar national life might come to flower. Bourne was not a poet, but William Carlos Williams worked in ways that contributed to Bourne's aim, and Edward Dahlberg has maintained his critical spirit. Three strong voices over a period of some seventy years. Our intellectual life is largely of the imaginative kind. And yet it is hard to think of a people who have suffered more from the

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effects of finance imperialism and cultural despoliation than the American people. That is why *Lucky Poet* is an important book for us.

The *Anthology* is a smaller collection than the *Collected Poems* published here by Macmillan, but it is an improvement on it in some ways, and as an introduction to MacDiarmid's poetry it is less overwhelming. One improvement is the printing of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle,* MacDiarmid's first major poem and still perhaps his most integral work, in its original form as a single poem. Another is the inclusion of the great meditative poem "On a Raised Beach" in its entirety. On the other hand, the collection does not include "Lament for the Great Music," and it contains only small bits of the fine "Cornish Heroic Song for Valda Trevlyn" and of the huge "programmatic poem" *The Kind of Poetry I Want,* and only a handful of the early Scots lyrics.

Two new translations of works by Pablo Neruda have also just been published: *The Captain's Verses,* and *Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta.* It is impossible to avoid comparing these two poets; their similarities are obvious. They both consider themselves national poets, and they both speak in the name of the oppressed. They have both written poems about the Russian Revolution, poems about the Spanish Civil War, poems about the great pre-history of their nations. The Incas and the Conquistadors are for Neruda what the Celts and the English are for MacDiarmid. And in *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* Neruda achieves precisely the fusion of time-in-place that is one of MacDiarmid's constant aims.

But taking note of these similarities, what is striking is the difference between MacDiarmid and Neruda. MacDiarmid is a battler, a man of antithetical impulses, a dramatic spirit in the highest sense (I mean in the sense that, although there are ideas that can be developed in a linear fashion, there are certain human truths that can only express themselves dramatically—which is what I think Yeats meant when he said "Man can embody the truth, but he cannot know it" and what Pasternak meant when he spoke of the "dramatic meaning of existence"). The tendency to reduction that has turned most successful revolutionaries into new oppressors, that has undermined most thought on the Left, and that has set revolution against poetry, has always been anathema to MacDiarmid, and he has always combatted it. For Neruda, on the other hand, it seems that no such problems exist. The conflicts and contradictions that are the real, dramatic meaning of the radical struggles of our time are smoothed away by the broad, simple flow of his enormous output; they have no place among his poetic materials. Neruda is a diplomat, which may not be good conditioning for a poet.

This difference is expressed poetically in another way: MacDi-

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armid's poems are always spoken by himself, out of the particular conditions of his own life, in the presence of actual landscapes, people, and events. His voice, for all its range, is always the voice of the living man MacDiarmid. Neruda's poems are spoken by a generic "I" who is not quite the living man Neruda, they describe a generic landscape and are addressed to a generic "people." There is a great deal of idealization in his work, and of attitudinizing. He makes a penetrating statement about this in his own prefatory note to *Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta:* "This is a tragic work, but it is also, in part, a *jeu d'esprit.*"

Joaquín Murieta is a strange work, a piece of theatricality, not theater. Neruda calls it variously an opera, a melodrama, a tragedy, an "insurrectionary cantata." He traces part of it to a Noh play he saw in Japan, of which he says: "I never grasped one iota of what was going on in the Japanese play. I would hope the spectators of this tragedy might have a similar experience." A witty statement, but an odd one. The translation by Ben Belitt is also odd. He explains in his preface that he has tried to overcome the generic quality of Neruda's language in order to make the piece more acceptable for an American audience—since it is set in the California of the gold rush. The results are not very good. It is extremely difficult to handle American vernacular:

> Gimme my watch!
> My gold-plated watch!
> Gimme my granddaddy's ticker!
> He went thataway!
> No, thisaway!
> Big-city slicker!

Could any actor speak these lines? They are Belitt's version of Neruda's:

> Mi reloj!
> Mi reloj!
> Mi reloj!
> Mi reloj!

The translation is wordy, as Belitt's work tends to be, and it does not escape his habit of writing in a bumping, anapestic rhythm. But the real problem with the work is that Neruda has no sense of the dramatic. At its best his poetry is a monologue, a one-man show.

The Captain's Verses is an example of Neruda's monologue. It is a collection of love poems written for his wife, published anonymously in a small edition in 1953, and reprinted with Neruda's acknowledgment in 1963. They are poems of sentiment, with an

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environmental sensuality, spoken by Neruda's generic "I" and addressed to his generic "woman." In one poem, in which he imagines what he would do if the woman died, he says:

> I shall go on living,
> because you wanted me to be, above all things,
> untameable,
> and, love, because you know that I am not just one man
> but all men.

It is clear that he wants to achieve the anonymity of "all men" not only in these poems but in all that he writes. That is a ruling tendency in his work. But I think it is an aesthetic error, a mannerism, and a kind of insinuation.

Neruda writes fluently, easily, abundantly, a poetry of enthusiasms and attitudes that are ready at hand in the world, not a poetry of facts, perceptions, and difficult knowledge. Vallejo's poetry was an event in the Spanish language; and like MacDiarmid, Vallejo has written for the life and spirit of his people. Neruda works in the middle style, with a middle consciousness, and what he writes belongs to literature.

But literary poetry has great variety within its limits, and if it is capable of monumental inconsequentiality, it is also capable of smaller but truer work. Richmond Lattimore describes the impulse behind his own poetry, and its limits, in a poem called "Verse":

> Nothing sacred here: no hysterical woman chewing
> buckthorn: no bardic beard on the high hill line communing
> with stars and muses . . .
>
> . . . still less is it
> to open the abdominal wall and invite approval
> of my intestines displayed: it is not confessional:
>
> but comes of some oyster's-irritant, some cinder promoting
> iris and spangle: that will not tolerate tranquility, until the
> percept is caught, sealed, fused, transposed as artifact.

The impersonal inwardness of this poem is characteristic of Lattimore, as is the hard prose of his language. Lattimore is a lively and skillful stylist, intellectually subtle, sensitive to forms and words, and he has the eye of a good photographer. Hopkins says that while "poetry proper" is "the language of inspiration"—by which he means "a mood of great, abnormal in fact, mental acuteness, either

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energetic or receptive"—literary poetry, which he calls Parnassian, "is written *on and from the level* of a poet's mind." That may be the most important distinction between the two, and it is precisely the distinction that Lattimore makes. Lattimore is an Alexandrian poet. And in fact the peculiar configuration of our time has created, along with movements for national separation, an international literary culture that is very much like the culture of the Alexandrians: sophisticated, self-conscious, open-minded, skeptical, ironic, multilingual, and Parnassian. Its most characteristic form is the verse essay, which Lattimore is a master of: an exercise in pure style, the delight of making an artifact of words; and in interpretive wit, the play of thought over the development of an image. Auden's "In Praise of Limestone" is a fine example of this kind of poetry, as is Lattimore's "Macedonian Chamber Tomb" which ends:

> Sun breaks now in the roof-hole. None so brave
> as this imbrained stone-hatted world of mine
> where the chambered girl dreams through her golden rain,
> and Plato's solipsists all in a line
> chained to their endless television pine
> for sky, and pull the world inside their cave.

Lattimore belongs to an older generation of poet-essayists; his work has the formal tautness and artistic conscience of the first postwar generation, and his collected *Poems from Three Decades* should establish him as one of the best poets of that generation. R. H. W. Dillard is a young poet; his work belongs to a freer and more personal conception of poetry. *After Borges,* his third book, is a sequence of original poems and free renditions of Borges, written with such grace and naturalness that they seem to be pure improvisations. They are mainly poems about literature and art, but they are essays written from the inside, from the point of view of poetry itself. In this they are both like and unlike Borges. Borges insists that the art-work is not to be identified with the artist, even that Borges is not to be identified with himself; that the destiny of the work is to abide as "another object added to the world" and the destiny of the artist is to be "devoured by time"; his very literary poetry plays on this discontinuity. What Dillard is fascinated with is the autonomy of the work itself. He enters into the life of the work, inhabits its world of perpetual moments, its world without darkness, and sees the artist through its eyes. Some of his best poems are about painters:

> It is hard to see Ryder sometimes
> For the light, solid as trees . . .
>
> ("Three More Friends" #1)

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Hopper's face is like windows,
You see yourself or a landscape,
The angles of stonework and steel,
The subtleties of water,
The energy of oil, Hopper's face
Is like sunlight, alone and alive.
("Three More Friends" #3)

Dillard is a poet in love with the peculiar mechanics of artistic freedom.

The poems in Denise Levertov's *Footprints* belong to a more diaristic and prosaic kind of literary poetry. They record impressions and talk about experiences, often with precise dates appended. Her political poems are not eloquent rhetoric, and not acute analysis, they are simply statements of her own convictions. Some of the poems in this book, like the "New Year's Garland" for her students, are so strictly personal that you wonder why she thought anyone else should read them. There is a certain presumptuousness about publishing a collection like this. Apollinaire said *"Il faut tout publier"* only when he knew he was dying.

But in another way I think I can understand and agree with the publication of a book like this, for the conception of poetry behind it. Better notes, sketches, beginnings, fragments, than the pointless skill of the rhetorical set-piece. Levertov believes that poetry is communication, and that it is even more primarily a daily, intimate language-activity, not a performance to be watched and applauded. But something is always sacrificed in literary poetry. Levertov seems to have set aside almost everything that makes the art of composition difficult.

To succeed in this kind of writing, a poet needs to have a sure sense of speech and strong material. There is too much easy sentimentality in these poems, too much wishfulness and wistfulness. And they fall too often into a literary language that permits her to say that the moon "tarries," that Keats stops to "pluck" a leaf, and to speak of "wanderers," of a house "embowered" in leaves, of a "dimlit" room. It is an eclectic language that does not sort well with the political realism that Levertov has been seeking in her work. And the same problem occurs in her choice of materials. The imagistic and dream-vision poems in *Footprints* have a natural piety that tends towards animism; "the crickets practice their religion of ecstasy" in a piece dedicated to Kenneth Rexroth, and in another a pet chameleon

now on a vast sheet of clear glass
cowers, and prays for vision
of russet bark and trembling foliage.

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They also contain reveries about a primitive, magical life that exsists only in sleep or in other parts of the world. Behind all of this there is an awareness of the essential relationship between the struggle for a more authentic vision and the struggle for a more authentic world, which is the heart of Hugh MacDiarmid's work. If Levertov does stand for this, it is important to recognize it, and it sets her apart from the usual concerns of the literary poet. But her expression of it is dangerously bound up with the old mystifications of romanticism.

Levertov is not as prolific as her books make her seem. But there are times when her art and material suddenly become sure of themselves, and she writes at greater risk and with a higher intensity. This happens in what I think is the only whole, true, and moving poem in the book: "The Malice of Innocence."

There is no unevenness in James Merrill's *Braving the Elements*. Merrill is a hermetic, brilliant, and very Alexandrian writer. The uniqueness of his poetry is determined by his particular language, by the quick tempo of his lines, the elusive prose structure that he works against the verse structure of the poem, the sketchiness of his mainly autobiographical material. His language is a singular achievement; it is at once lyrical and sarcastic, conversational and quaintly formal:

> Yesterday's flower, American Beauty,
> Crimson and sweet all night in the city,
> Limp now, changed in import as in color,
> Floats behind us in the tinkling cooler.
>
> Yesterday also Robert Kennedy's
> Train of refrigerated dignitaries
> Last seen on TV burying Dr King
> Wormed its way to Arlington Cemetery.
>
> The beauty I mean to press fading
> Between these lines is yours, and the misleading
> Sweetness, leaves and portals of a body
> Ajar, cool, nodding at the wheel already.

This poem, part 2 of "In Nine Sleep Valley," is a miniature of the whole collection, not only in its ambivalence of tone. The assimilation of disparate things through the development of a single image, the use of clichés and given word-items, the intrusion of modern "product consciousness," the vagueness of personal reference, the interweaving of private and public events, are the constant elements of Merrill's vision.

Merrill's own background is upper middle class, as we see in "Days of 1935." It persists for him now only in fragments, a few

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image-memories, some left-over clothes. It has either exploded or fallen to pieces. Merrill looks at these fragments and memories with detachment and very little apparent sympathy. But this attitude conceals another kind of sympathy. He will accept the objects and accoutrements of bourgeois life only when they show their mortality, and he will accept the world he grew up in only when it admits how empty, pathetic, and full of illusions it was. For him there is no new world taking shape on the ruins of the old. There is only the step from illusion into "the elements."

Catastrophe is a precondition for most of these poems—"After the Fire," "18 West 11th Street," "The Emerald," "Electra." In "Pieces of History" Merrill sees that the force of the elements extends into the past as well; he describes an ancient royal couple in their tomb:

> How long equipped for a fantastic trek
> Back to the sun and moon they had to be.
> Time would have undressed them to the teeth,
> Sucked their bones but spared their filigree.

And "In Nine Sleep Valley" identifies the poet's vision of his own circumstances with the break-up of the American idea: "Sorry things all. Accepting them's the art." In other words, he opens this experience of becoming "unillusioned" out from his own life, to the political issues of our time, to the whole of human history. No form of illusion will be spared the edge of his irony; his lyricism touches only finite, mortal objects and persons, exposed to the elements and only then revealed in their true condition. It remains to be said that this is a specifically middle class vision or poetic mechanism. There is no labor in Merrill's world, and there is no richness of human culture; there is nothing that abides, nothing to be preserved; and so there is no responsibility. He says at the end of "Dreams about Clothes":

> Tell me something, Art.
> You know what it's like
> Awake in your dry hell
> Of volatile synthetic solvents.
> Won't you help us brave the elements
> Once more, of terror, anger, love?
> Seeing there's no end to wear and tear
> Upon the lawless heart,
> Won't you as well forgive
> Whoever settles for the immaterial?
> Don't you care how we live?

Who is this Art, if not the artist? What I am saying about Merrill's

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work is not intended to be a negative judgment; I want to point out that his vision is true, but with a very particular truth, and that ambivalence runs deep in his nature. The art he calls on in these lines is not an art of ambiguities, ironies, alienations, in which only a modicum of personal feeling is left for warmth; it is not his own art, it is a more radical art.

The essential quality of literary poetry is its lack of radical spirit. *Radical,* pertaining to root, origin, what is fundamental, but keeping its political associations. In Merrill's work there is a constant play with words, but there is no play with meanings, roots, the source of language. The language he uses is made up of bits and remains; and his vision, his particular poetic mechanism, has little to do with the fundamental conditions of existence. If "man-the-artist finds himself, willy-nilly, un-integrated with the present civilizational phase" (David Jones), the same is true of man-the-producer. And if man-the-producer and man-the-artist are originally and essentially man-himself, their un-integration with the present civilizational phase calls for radical action. What is at stake is the recovery of the rooted, the fundamental, the abiding.

The truth of James Merrill's poetry is that it is not simply a series of well-made poems, that it embodies the ethos of a particular class at a particular time in its history. The limitation of his work is in its acceptance of that condition, that is, in Merrill's identification of a particular ethos with the whole of human experience and the truth of history. There is nothing happening in the world he portrays. A more radical poet would find ways of representing not only a particular ethos but the forces that have created it, he would represent it as limited and changeable; which means that at the same time he would be showing something more fundamental and enduring. Radicalism is the essential quality of the free spirit. Heidegger has given this definition of "spirit" in his *Introduction to Metaphysics:*

> Spirit is neither empty cleverness nor the irresponsible play of wit, nor the boundless work of dismemberment carried on by the practical intelligence; much less is it world-reason; no, spirit is a fundamental, knowing resolve toward the essence of being.

II

Antonio Machado called St. John of the Cross *"acaso el más hondo lírico español,"* perhaps the deepest, the most profound lyric poet of Spain. Willis Barnstone's translation of *The Poems of St. John of the Cross,* minus the poet's commentaries, has been reissued by New Directions. The book is simply and beautifully printed, as

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classic poetry should be, without the intrusion of scholarly matter, the Spanish text on one side of the page, the English version running line for line on the other. The poems of Pierre Reverdy have been reissued in the same format, by the same publisher, in a selection translated by Kenneth Rexroth. There are important and direct connections between these two poets. There are also important differences. St. John of the Cross was born in 1542, and Reverdy died in 1960. It would be absurd to attempt a summary of the changes that occurred over that period of time. But I think it is possible to attempt a penetration into it, using the one constant in question here—the poetry of the spirit.

Machado was not alone in his estimate of St. John of the Cross. Lorca said in his lecture "The Duende": "The Muse of Góngora and the Angel of Garcilaso must yield up the laurel wreath when the *Duende* of St. John of the Cross passes by. . . ." But what may strike someone reading these poems for the first time, if he has some knowledge of Spanish, is not their depth or power but their lightness and playfulness. Their intensity is not solemn, is not the result of rhetorical or emotional emphasis; it comes from an absolute purity of language and image. This purity is not incompatible with the humor of a famous line in the "Spiritual Canticle" in which the Bride describes how the "thousand graces" of the Bridegroom overwhelm her and leave her stammering: "y déjame muriendo,/ un no sé qué que quedan balbuciendo." This stuttering effect is unfortunately lost in Barnstone's translation of the lines: "and they keep babbling bits/ of mystery—leaving me near death." (Which is also a slight mistranslation, since it is the Bride, not the graces, that the word *balbuciendo* [stammering] refers to.) Barnstone's versions are clear and usually accurate, but they are unrhythmical and unmusical, and at times unfortunate in their choice of words. One stanza that the entire "Canticle" rises to, begins: "Gocémonos, Amado . . ." and ends: "entremos más adentro en la espesura." Barnstone translates these lines: "Let us be happy, darling," and "let us go deeper in the wood." But the word *gocémonos* refers to something much more sensual than being happy; it means something like "let us possess each other" or "let us enjoy each other," as well as "let us rejoice together." And in the second line, the word *espesura,* which is one of the most crucial and revealing in these poems, means "thicket" or "the densest part of the woods," not simply "wood." Penetration into the thicket is related to the other great metaphor in the poetry of St. John of the Cross, the metaphor of the Dark Night.

Jorge Guillén, whom Barnstone quotes in his introduction to this book, has said that although St. John of the Cross wrote these poems out of his own mystical experiences, they do not communicate mystical experience to the reader, that they remain "a group of

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independent songs, or almost independent, with an almost complete coherence of metaphor, so continuous that it ceases to be metaphor and becomes the relating of adventures and exalting emotions. . . ." If this is so, it is something that has "happened" to the poems over the past four centuries. There can be no doubt that St. John of the Cross used the metaphorical language of love, which was well understood in his time as it was in the Middle Ages, with a constant awareness of its correspondences. These correspondences are the expression of a "fundamental, knowing resolve toward the essence of being," towards that being which is both revealed and reserved within appearance. The "Canticle" begins when the Bride asks "Where are you hiding?" If this being could be adequately celebrated by a correct accounting of all that is merely present, there would be no poetry of the spirit. For the Greeks, the gods were constatations of being, but the figures of the gods mean that being is not synonymous with the whole of what is present, it is that which is yet to be revealed within appearance. It is interesting that the Christian poetry of the Middle Ages reached its highest development not in biblical renditions or lives of the saints but in the celebration of love. Love was the hidden essence that called to the poet from the other side of appearance—a woman in a tower, a dream-visitation, Beatrice in Paradise. And this language of correspondences was still a living medium for St. John of the Cross.

Yeats has formulated what happened in the intervening centuries:

> Locke sank into a swoon;
> The Garden died;
> God took the spinning-jenny
> Out of his side.

The spinning-jenny, the world-machine, asks only to be known; its essence is deducible from its totality; it brings with it a conception of truth as a correct account of its functioning, not as vision or revelation. The rise of this world-idea was simultaneous and synonymous with the rise of the middle class. The middle class man, the *bourgeois,* is "a man of this world," as Berdyaev has said. It is this man whose ascendancy, by means of money, brought about the modern world and all that specifically relates to it: scientism, technology, industrialization, mechanization, the extension of "finance imperialism" all over the world, the rapid exhaustion of the earth and the disruption of its natural balances. The "world" that the bourgeois claims to be a man of is a world based on nothing. It is a world that exists "gratis." And in order to be a man of it, the bourgeois had to develop certain blindnesses, specifically to those experiences which have always driven men to penetrate deeper into appearance: the experiences of suffering and of nothingness. It was especially

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necessary for the bourgeois to avoid seeing suffering, because he was creating so much of it among the working classes. It was necessary for him to avoid seeing nothingness, because it was the hole under his feet.

Hypocrisy, duplicity, and neurosis became world phenomena with the rise of the middle class. Those who accept the world as it is (i.e. as it appears) come inevitably to the experience of its nullity. To get around this experience, the bourgeois invented optimism, entertainment, pleasure, the consumer society. But the true nature of his optimism is that it conceals the most profound pessimism, the conviction that the world is really nothing and man is dust. It is bourgeois to have these two minds: the extroverted happy and industrious mind, and the introverted nihilistic mind; the extroverted humane and decent mind, and the ulterior self-seeking, position- and profit-conscious mind. It is bourgeois to divide life into pleasant lies and harsh truths. It is bourgeois to associate the ugly, the unpleasant, the evil, the despairing, the pessimistic, with the truth. When the bourgeois falls into despair, he always thinks that he is "admitting it to himself." All of these things must have occurred among men before, but they were never a ruling spirit or a dominant world-outlook before.

Poetry, since it is rooted in language, retains all that language has been capable of expressing in the past, all that has been made into poetry. But poets under the domination of the bourgeois "spirit" find themselves in a peculiar position: the world is no longer adequate to the richness of their language. This has been the basis of the poetic opposition to the bourgeois "spirit" ever since that spirit began to consolidate its position. In fact, the opposition was quick to come, and radically perceptive, in the poetry of Blake, for instance. But Blake also exemplifies the problem of this kind of opposition—the creation of a private system or vision which does not succeed in becoming a common vision. Visionary romanticism and revolutionary romanticism both have their source in the inadequacy of the bourgeois "world."

But there is another poetry, neither visionary nor revolutionary, that has come about at the very center of the bourgeois "world": the poetry of nothingness. The revelation of "nothing" is a true revelation in a "world" whose "something" is groundless. The experience of nullity has a metaphysical as well as a class basis, though the two are related in that the experience of nullity would not become the object of revelation if the "world" that gives rise to it were not an illusion. A poetry that questions into "the nothing of this night," as Heidegger has described the poetry of Hölderlin, is the purest result of the domination of the bourgeois world. A poetry in which the expected revelation does not take place—the

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poetry of Kafka, and of Samuel Beckett. And the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé. The bond between this poetry and the mystical poetry of St. John of the Cross should be clear. Simone Weil has observed that Mallarmé's disciples considered him "something of a saint as well as a poet." But he was a saint without a religion, who was forced to create a new language of radiance, or who (as Walter Benjamin said of Kafka) "gave up the content of tradition for the sake of its transmissibility."

In his preface to the *Selected Poems* of Pierre Reverdy, Rexroth says that Reverdy was "the first important French poet . . . to develop the methods of communication explored by Mallarmé." He also says that Reverdy's poetry is the result of a "self-induced, or naturally and mysteriously come-by, creative state from which two of the most fundamental human activities diverge, the aesthetic and the mystic act." And further on, that Reverdy

> was aware of the final deductions to be made from his poetry as a whole and from his poetic experience when in his most illuminated poems he pushed it to its limits. It is not necessary that the poet have any special religious belief, or any at all, but if poetic vision is refined until it is sufficiently piercing and sufficiently tensile, it cuts through the reality it has reorganized to an existential transcendence.

René Char has called Reverdy *"un poète sans fouet ni miroir,"* a poet without whip or mirror, meaning, I think, that like St. John of the Cross he writes a poetry of pure image and metaphor, stripped of emphasis and rhetoric. He does not try to correct his fellow men, and he does not portray himself or confess himself in his poems. He watches time after time something that is like a vaporizing of the world:

> Bundles of luminous reflections
> Regrets
> All the debris of time crackles on the hearth
> ("Out of Proportion")

> So all the echoes are lost in noise
> The voices spattered on the mossy walls
> The lines of passion twisted in rubble
> In the thread towards the distant glimmer
> And these hands hung from the line of the horizon
> So many signs of love
> So many wings in the stairways
> ("And Now")

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The transcendence that Rexroth mentions is not a vision of the timeless, the god-head, it is a vision of the momentary, radiant being of the world as it reveals itself against nothingness. The thought that thinks about process and change, that conceives of the world as a functioning machine, naturally evolves a generic language; it sees the individual in terms of its kind. The thought about nothing can, as Heidegger has shown, lead to a perception of being which is, in a special sense, ecstatic.

The asceticism of Mallarmé, of Kafka, of Beckett, of Reverdy (who spent the last thirty years of his life as a lay associate in the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes), speaks for the risk that this kind of creation involves. The poetry of Sylvia Plath, in *Ariel* and even more clearly in this last collection, *Winter Trees,* bears witness to it. The danger lies in the demonic power that the "thought about nothing" can hold over the mind, taking possession of it and controlling it in an obsessive way. The deepest danger of the bourgeois "world" is the unlimited power it gives to imagination. The handful of lyrics in *Winter Trees* is a set of variations on the experience of nullity, which, like a flaw in her eye, Sylvia Plath sees everywhere. It is not an experience of death or violence; she says in "The Detective": "This is a case without a body./ The body does not come into it at all." It is what happened to the Arthurian country of Lyonesse, in her poem of that title; it sank into the sea off Cornwall, and she imagines that the people go on living in this alien element:

> The clear, green, quite breathable atmosphere,
> Cold grits underfoot,
> And the spidery water-dazzle on field and street.

And she imagines a god who had

> . . . lazily closed one eye and let them slip
> Over the English cliff and under so much history!
> . . .
> The white gape of his mind was the real Tabula Rasa.

Mallarmé and Reverdy both undertook their combat-in-secret in order to defeat the demonic monster and deliver the world's reality. Sylvia Plath's images are not set off against nothing, they are images of the nullity *in* things, and that is what makes them uncanny. She knew that this was a state of mind, though it was also a perception of the life around her. The poem "Amnesiac" ends:

> O sister, mother, wife,
> Sweet Lethe is my life,
> I'm never, never, never coming home!

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Lethe is the river of concealment; it is the opposite of the Greek word for truth, *aletheia,* which shares the same root. The amnesiac experiences the absence of revelation, an absolute forgetting which is the equivalent of non-being. If these poems were only the record of a private obsession, they would have no value as poetry. But they are much more than that. Once in this book, in the beautiful title poem, she describes the landscape in images that transcend the demonic—the trees

> Full of wings, otherworldliness.
> In this they are Ledas.
> O mother of leaves and sweetness
> Who are these pietas?
> The shadows of ringdoves chanting, but easing nothing.

Her poetry is religious in the way that Mallarmé and Reverdy are religious, facing the absence of belief, myth, or doctrine, and without substituting the experience of tradition for revelation. I think it is right to see the spirit of St. John of the Cross behind them; the best of these poems have the selflessness, the purity of image, and the artistic rightness of his songs; and they have what he considered most important: *"la desnudez del espíritu,"* spiritual nakedness.

Francis Ponge, whose work is finally becoming known here, has created another kind of poetry, less passive than the poetry of "nothingness," or more conscious of its opposition to the wilfulness and groundlessness of the bourgeois "world." The title of the book that brought him recognition in France, *Le parti pris des choses* ("Taking the Side of Things"), states the decision that stands behind his work. He has explained it himself:

> It is less a matter of truth than the integrity of the mind, and less the integrity of the mind than that of the whole man. No possible compromise between taking the side of ideas or things to be described, and taking the side of words. Given the singular power of words, the absolute power of the established order, only one attitude is possible: taking the side of things all the way.

The new selection of Ponge's writings, *The Voice of Things,* edited and translated by Beth Archer, contains the full text of *Le parti pris des choses,* two of Ponge's essays on method ("My Creative Method" and "The Silent World is Our Only Homeland"), and, among other things, his beautiful poem *Le Pré* ("The Prairie" or "Meadow"). The book is less fragmented than Cid Corman's *Things,* and the translations are very good; unfortunately it is not bilingual.

Ponge speaks of his poetry as "a kind of glance-that-is-spoken." And he says (in "My Creative Method"):

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> Ideas are not my forte. I do not handle them with ease. They handle me instead. Give me a queasy feeling, nausea. I don't like to find myself thrown in their midst. Objects in the external world, on the other hand, delight me. They sometimes surprise me, but seem in no way concerned about my approval: which they immediately acquire. I do not question them.

These two passages may give only a suggestion of the radical departure of Ponge's work, but they should indicate his understanding of the connection between the "established order" and the emptying, abstracting, and rationalizing of words. Taking the side of things, he says, means taking account of words. Ponge is a linguistic radical, a lover of dictionaries—something he shares with MacDiarmid. In "The Silent World" he says:

> Poets . . . should get to the very bottom. Society, furthermore, takes good care of putting them there, and the love of things keeps them there; they are ambassadors of the silent world. As such, they stammer, they murmur, they sink into the darkness of logos—until at last they reach the level of ROOTS, where things and formulas are one.

And he thinks of the resulting poems as "definition-description-literary-art-works," or as word-objects which will "steadily oppose (*object*-ify, affirm themselves as objects) the spirit of each generation." The real events in a poem are events of language. Ponge has given a new poetry, not just more poems, to the French language, through his attentiveness to things and to words, his minute care for them, and his willingness to let-them-be.

There are two young American poets whose new books seem to me to share something of this spirit: Paul Nelson, and Robert Morgan. Paul Nelson's *Cargo* is a beautifully made book, hand printed by The Stone Wall Press and The Seamark Press, in an edition limited to 250 copies. Nelson's poems are often whimsical, and sometimes modish, but they are based on a language of objects and materials. What finally matters, however, is not objects but the spirit in which they are seen. Nelson's poem "The Boy" ends with the line: "the only rape is pity." It is the absence of pity that gives his language strength and that gives an edge to his descriptions of himself and of the world. The imaginative (or whimsical) connections in his poems are an indirect strategy for approaching the real objects, locations, and details of his region. The poem "Maenads" is a catalogue of wildflower names woven into a warning against loving "mad girls":

> Save yourself;
> sulk like fenched vetch,

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be passed up scallion,
hairy sumac.
Stay rooted before
your bathroom mirror
like a vine-tied cartwheel
in the local dump.
Spend your seed like chokecherries
on a hovel floor,
but stay away
from tainted girls.

They carry angelica
and monkshood. . . .

By this approach he achieves something far stronger than the usual New England nature poetry, something like the flower-incantations in old Welsh. The phrasing of his poems is very sure, at times blunt and stony, at times musical—"Going Out" begins:

The stars blush; they
are not hidden by the leaves.
Come, we are young again,
wide-eyed at stars, at trees bowing down.
The leaves have turned to mould
as white as snow.

Nelson's work is in the process of acquiring an authentic language and rooted poetic material. He says little or nothing about public events and does not seem to have a "modern" consciousness; his work makes me wonder whether the political experiences of the past ten years may not bring about a kind of separatism within this country, an opposition of spirit that may lead to the cultivation of a place, a region, a realm of correspondences and meanings that is beyond the reach of our international literary culture.

The spirit of Ponge is even more strongly suggested, though in another way, by Robert Morgan's book *Red Owl*. Morgan's poetry is not so clearly of a region, but it is more absolute than Nelson's in its creation of a language of objects and materials, and in building this language into metaphors that physically *embody* a vision. The poem "The Spring" suggests how this method works:

Kneel and look into the quiet
hermetic valley, desert of broken armor,
sand beacons.
The breath of underground islands lifts to the sun.

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Horizon feeds
on the dark hill of space
where the dead go.
Smoke of extinct tribes in quartz.

The absoluteness of this attempt to make matter articulate is indicated by Morgan's suppression of verbs and active subjects; the time in his poems is natural time—organic or geological, observed in the degree to which things have broken down, worn away, been transformed by natural process. A man in the act of hoeing, on the other hand, is caught in a single moment:

He hoes the rocks, the afternoon, he hoes forever.
Cornpatch swung on the hill like a cape,
fields draped from the horizon,
clod tapestries.

The mountains wet blue tents watching.

But because this world is without spirit, because it admits of no transcendence, time is the only thing that is happening in it. And therefore the central poem in the book is the poem called "Time":

When I stand in a field
the field and I are a sundial.
But the body alone is a clock, and each
motion it makes.
Something must distract us, anything.
The cornfield slapping in the rhythm of a tennis game,
a crow flying his clockhands on a face
without surface.
The will always hungry.

With this poem, we begin to realize why Morgan's natural transcriptions are not joyful, why there is a tenseness and a darkness in them. Everything must always be made over again, and there is a hint of future possibilities in Morgan's brief poem "Present":

Our alchemy must be secret.
On cold moss
the redhot salamander.
Now is the dictionary of everything.
Doorway.
A place to stand.

For vision cannot be extracted from an inventory of details, any

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more than the gods of the Greeks or the poetry of mystical love were logical deductions from the given world. "Man is a 'borderer,' " David Jones has said, "he is the sole inhabitant of a tract of country where matter marches with spirit, so that whatever he does, good or bad, affects the economy of those two domains." And Francis Ponge, the poet of objects, says of the function of poetry: "It is to nourish the spirit of man by giving him the cosmos to suckle."

III

I have been trying to sketch out certain relationships within which the judgment of poetry can have some meaning. I think it is an indication of A. R. Ammons' importance that all of these relationships are at issue in his work.

Ammons' *Collected Poems* is the result of something that is often talked about but rarely seen: the process of poetic growth. His poetry gathers more and more together as it goes on, and the latest poems in the book are not only stronger, deeper, and richer than any he has written, they are also culminations of all that has gone before them.

Many true poets have been accused of not growing; in fact, St. John of the Cross did not "grow" as a poet; but the theory of evolution is not a final test of poetry. It happens that Ammons has grounded his work in the principle of growth, the "organic analogy" that is the one constant thing on his mind and the inner law of his style—

> I allow myself eddies of meaning:
> yield to a direction of significance
> running
> like a stream through the geography of my work:
> ("Corsons Inlet")

which explains why his freely shaped poems have unmistakeable formal qualities. It is an improvisatory style, led by intuition to moments when everything that is in play comes together. It is characteristic of Ammons that he does not simply make use of free or patterned forms, that he has redefined the principles of form and made them express his way of seeing—his awareness of constant flow and change, in irregular poems like "Corsons Inlet" or in the later stanzaic poems which are improvisations around arbitarily fixed forms and line lengths. His sureness in allowing himself this freedom comes from his faith in the organic analogy between poetry and the processes that create forms and "nucleations" in the natural world. And this same analogy is the basis of his metaphorical speech, in which correspondences are constantly being born out of descriptions,

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in which the metaphor and its object become interchangeable.

This singlemindedness is a source of endless possibilities. In "Essay on Poetics" Ammons says:

> but the main confluence
> is one:many which all this essay is about: I get lost for fun
> because there's no chance of getting lost.

He also says, turning inward: "poems, of human make, are body images, organisms of this human organism." All of which is very close to some of Ponge's comments on his own method, and to the ideas Paul Klee develops in his Jena lecture (1924). And even closer to this passage from Mandelstam's "Talking about Dante":

> The question occurs to me—and quite seriously—how many sandals did Alighieri wear out in the course of his poetic work, wandering about on the goat paths of Italy?
>
> The *Inferno* and especially the *Purgatorio* glorify the human gait, the measure and rhythm of walking, the foot and its shape.
>
> The step, linked to the breathing and saturated with thought: this Dante understands as the beginning of prosody.

What these artists share is a recognition of something beyond the deliberate making of form: the mystery (which is a real one, not a lack of information) of the formulation of the work, the mystery of its genesis. Ammons says:

> and in poems, the insubstantial processes of becoming
> form inscrutable parts of the living thing: and then how the
>
> orders of the poem build up and cooperate into the pure heat of
> sight and insight, trembling and terror: it makes me gasp
> aghast:
> no wonder we pedants talk about history, influence, meaning
>
> in poems: that's peripheral enough to prevent the commission of
> larger error . . . .

Ammons is not a mystical poet, he is a cosmic poet. There is evidence enough for this statement in his work, though we can hardly use the word effectively. The implicit aim of his poetry is a picture of the cosmos, achieved by inclusiveness, not by penetration. His basic attitude is a joyful acceptance, delight in the variety and confluence of natural events. He is a cosmic humorist; he broods on the force of necessity, the sovereign ruler of all process, not like a philosopher but like a hen, giving it the borrowed warmth of his own body. His poetry hums with the self-delight that one might imagine is the

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state of mind of all matter moved by energy and conducted through infinite variations; its continuous flow overcomes its moments of arrest. In "Essay on Poetics" he develops a long comparison of creeks, rivers, and oceans to describe the various states of poetry, ending: "but you will say, what of the content—why they are all made of water."

"The step, linked to the breathing and saturated with thought. . . ." The unresolved issue in Ammons' poetry, which grows more serious as he extends his reach, is precisely the function of thought in poetry. Ammons is a thoughtful poet, he pushes his thought into more and more complex nucleations, but his thought is always turned towards the observation of natural process, which means that his "organic analogy" is in danger of becoming a much stricter identification. Analogy is a free relationship, identity is determined. This crux leads him to two great questions, which he confronts in his later poems: the question of human freedom; and the question of what to say to his fellow men, or whether to say anything. One of these questions is metaphysical, the other is "cultural," but they both point away from the spectacle of the universe, towards the difficult realm of history, meaning, poetic content, the poet's place in society.

I believe that the conflict he works his way into is a conflict between the authenticity of his poetry of origins, with all that is implicit in it, and the inauthenticity of the bourgeois "world." And that the conflict is not between Ammons and the "world," as it is for MacDiarmid, but between Ammons and himself. It is possible to trace his approach to it, his reluctant struggle with it, and the increasing seriousness and darkness of his vision, in the three long poems at the end of the *Collected Poems:* "Essay on Poetics," "Extremes and Moderations," and "Hibernaculum."

"Essay on Poetics" speaks of the organic analogy, of the joy that is its basic principle—

> organisms, I can tell you, build up under the thrust to
> joy and nothing else can lift them out of the miry circum-
> stance:
> and poems are pure joy, however divisionally they sway with
> grief:
> the way to joy is integration's delivery of the complete lode:

and therefore of the "extreme value" of poetry. This is the brightest and most confident of the three poems. But it contains a moment of very serious levity:

> I believe in fun:
>
> "superior amusement" is a little shitty: fun is nice: it's what

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> our society is built on: fun in the enterprise: I believe in it:
> I have no faith in the scoffers: they are party-poopers who are
>
> afraid they ought to believe in history . . . .

If he means this to be humorous, it is merely silly. If he means it literally, it shows a disturbing ignorance of the nature of human society, of our society particularly, and of the conditions under which the exploited classes live. The "Essay" leaves us with the impression of a man who believes that poetry is valuable for its representation of the integral world, who is deeply concerned with the lot in life of worms, snails, shrimp, clams, and oysters, but who can call the failures of symbiosis and the breakdown of correspondences in bourgeois society "fun in the enterprise."

This moment of levity doesn't last. In "Extremes and Moderations," a meditation on natural balance, Ammons runs directly into a complex problem which involves human freedom, social responsibility, and the life-destructiveness of industrial capitalism: the problem of pollution. In a wry celebration of natural balance, he says: "just think, the best cure/ would arise by subtle influence of itself if only we could disappear. . . ." This implies that mankind is not wholly ruled by the organic analogy; that although the formulation of thought may have its source in organic processes, the *content* of human thought is able to move outside of process, and even to act against it—that it is free to recognize but also to not-recognize. Later in the poem, Ammons turns to the socio-economic world and addresses himself to it in a passage that is close to Hugh MacDiarmid's polemical style:

> . . . moderation is losing its quality, its effect: the
> artificial has taken on the complication of the natural and where
> to take hold, how to let go, perplexes individual action: ruin
> and gloom are falling off the shoulders of progress: blue-green
>
> globe, we have tripped your balance and gone into exaggerated
> possession: this seems to me the last poem written to the world
> before its freshness capsizes and sinks into the slush: the
> rampaging industrialists, the chemical devisers and manipulators
>
> are forging tanks, filling vats of smoky horrors because of
> dollar lust, so as to live in long white houses on the summits
> of lengthy slopes, for the pleasures of making others spur and
> turn. . . .

It is typical of the bourgeois "spirit" that it is unmoved by the conditions of human suffering and exploitation but roused to furious insight by the destruction of its scenery. This passage remains Ammons'

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strongest statement. And even so, he is embarrassed by it at the end and gives his readers a way out:

> it's Sunday
> morning accounts for such preachments, exhortations, and
> solemnities. . . .

He throws away the moment of insight and reinstates the world of Sunday mornings and preachments and the will to inaction. What he throws away is the possibility of further correspondences which would have integrated human society and the question of freedom into his organic, cosmic-tending vision. Bourgeois society cannot be integrated, it is essentially out of harmony. This realization is one of the sources of radical thought, and Ammons arrives at it inevitably by extending his vision to include the social world around him. But precisely at this point he falls into the pessimism that is the "unconscious" or demonic realm of the bourgeois spirit.

The longest poem in the book, and certainly the most integral expression of Ammons' vision, is "Hibernaculum"; it is a reflection on his earlier work, but also a darkening and deepening of it. "Hibernaculum" is a winter poem. It contains such statements as: "history informs despair," "I am alarmed with acceptance," "we're given the works to/ purchase nothing," "what can we make of holding so/ to what we must give up?" In the course of his meditation, he prays to "God (or whatever . . .)," and again to "the empty place where the god/ who has been deposed lived. . . ." This empty place becomes the backdrop of his world, and against it "motion, that spirit!"

I have said that those who see the world as a spectacle cannot avoid the experience of its nullity. That is the source of bourgeois pessimism, and of the meditations in "Hibernaculum." Ammons says:

> I write what is left after everything's sold out:
> and also I write not very wide, just to the fence or hedge
> around the lot. . . .

He says:

> public, I have nothing to say to you, nothing: except
> look at the caterpillar under this clump of grass: it
> is fuzzy: look at the sunset: it is colorful. . . .

Further on, he thinks:

> by the time I get to the end of this

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> all, I'll have to have found something to say to the
>
> people: this scratching around in the private self has
> to yield something beyond a private waste of time. . . .

As Paul Klee said in his Jena lecture, perhaps with more understanding: "we seek a people." But Ammons doesn't find something to say to the people. As for the soul, he says: "I feel in the company of the soul, however, nervous:/ I grow arch and curt: I talk nasty. . . ." And close to the poem's conclusion, he discusses the poetics of "nothingness."

"Hibernaculum" is an end to the long improvisation of Ammons' poetry, a gathering up of the results and a recognition of what has been revealed. The poem is also, historically, a recapitulation of the elements that make up the bourgeois "world" and the bourgeois "spirit." I am not taking this partisan attitude lightly, nor do I mean it as a condemnation of the poem. Despite all the talk about rapid change, poetry moves very slowly and must carry a great deal with it. By that it is a faithful sign. Lucidity is the negative capability of thought. A *hibernaculum* is a winter burrow, a retreat, and a place of waiting.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Asp and the Entrails: An Entertainment

HILARIOUS, MAYBE THAT'S THE KINDEST WORD for this book,[1] which in behalf of public order had better be taken as a hoax. Sometimes the style is abstract: "The ethical is superior to aestheticism, in that the self-concern of the fancy and willfulness is replaced by a more objective vision of the self, a vision that goes beyond self-conception and potential being toward actual performance"; and sometimes the style is concrete: "In the 1350s, with his hair gray and his remaining years visibly short, Petrarch acutely senses how limited is his time and is equally determined not to waste or spare a moment." (The reviewer, his remaining hair visibly short, is likely to be interrupted here and told that all he ever talks about is *style*.) Sometimes the style is blankly versical: "Man's victories are measured not in time . . ."; "But even here there is no resting place." Sometimes thickly allusive: "as in *Hamlet* or *Lycidas*, or in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger . . ."; "Lear's position, similar to that of Alfred North Whitehead in the *Function of Reason*, is that man has desires and needs which differ from those of simple survival. . . . [Lear] . . . feels the need for kindness, respect, and reverence, for generosity reciprocated and acknowledged, for attention being paid [Willy Loman, Arthur Miller, Marilyn Monroe], for still being somebody, although he has lost the power to command." Sometimes precise: "for Petrarch, for Rabelais, for Shakespeare, and for Milton, it is precisely this new sense of time . . ."; "precisely what is lacking . . ."; "Precisely the society to develop this new time sense . . ." (all within twenty-one consecutive lines of zero-zero intelligibility).

If typical scholarly theses are nets to catch the wind, Quinones' thesis is a stupendous vacuum into which rushes the accumulated hot air of ten thousand graduate seminars: "Curiously enough, given this century's own fascination with time—the century of Proust and Mann and Joyce, of 'West-Running Brook,' 'The Directive,'[2] and the *Four Quartets*—there exists no comprehensive and organic study of time in the literature of the Renaissance. This gap is more surprising when one considers . . ."; though "I am of course not suggesting that the study of time in the literature of the Renaissance is virgin territory." Virgin or territorial, comprehensive or unintelligible, organic or sprayed, Quinones' bag is time; his texts are merely Dante, Petrarch,

[1] THE RENAISSANCE DISCOVERY OF TIME, by *Ricardo J. Quinones*. Harvard University Press. $15.00.

[2] The correct title of Frost's poem is "Directive."

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Rabelais, Montaigne, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton; and characteristic Quinonian propositions read as follows:

> True to its form, Shakespeare's argument of time exhorts response.
>
> Spenser begins with myth containing strong suggestion for personal apprehension.
>
> Society's development is doomed when ignorant armies clash in the very heart of the family.
>
> Such maximum exploitation of time in writers like Rabelais and Petrarch is introduced so as to forget time.
>
> But the important attitude to which Petrarch came most clearly and abundantly in the 1360s is somewhere in between activism and nothingness.
>
> Milton resists the incontinent need to show fruit.
>
> Spenser complains that the hyphenated ideal of Sidney has been ruptured.
>
> Even time, as we have seen in contrast with the sure acquisition of enduring goals, is reduced to its proper insubstantiality.
>
> Through the growth in the order of society, success has been negated by being prepaved [*sic*].
>
> There is no death-wish in Robinson Crusoe, no overreaching ambition; unseemly moments of hysteria, fear, and retching are blandly ignored or repressed from his account.
>
> The cry of alarm is natural to the argument of time.
>
> The dangers of blurred sight and the benefits of clear vision run throughout Petrarch's expostulations over time.

(That last one could be forgiven as the topic sentence of a letter to *PMLA* from a deranged optometrist.)

Time is clocks, schedules, routines, life, death, children, fame, foresight, hindsight, eyesight, blindness, succession, regression, past, present, future, fear, hope, apathy, ambition, love, hate, secularity, prophecy, horizontality (as opposed to verticality), caution, rashness, motion, suspension, anything else. Precisely. In Petrarch's poetry and prose, which are virtually immortal, "time is practically omnipresent." At every performance of *Dr. Faustus* it's the audience's responsibility to be "driven wild by the inevitable movement of time." (Douglas Bush calls *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* "a ripe product of active thought and insight"; Harry Levin praises Quinones' "important contribution to comparative literature, to the history of ideas, and indeed to his readers' perspectives on human experience.") *Macbeth,* which is about the dangers of blurred sight and the benefits of clear vision, teaches the lesson that it's a mistake to be wrong. The "famous speech shows . . . [Macbeth's] awareness that he has fallen into the common fallacy of always looking to a tomorrow"; and at this point Quinones advances to the positive side of the rostrum: "Basically . . . the speech is nihilistic; it does not take account of the restorative and

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healing powers in life, the possibilities for growth, of all the satisfactions, successes, and even wisdom available to historical man," not to mention the possibility of moving to another country and setting up in business again with a few new murders. Quinones vividly distinguishes, *en passant,* between the bodies politic of *Macbeth* and *Lear:* in the former, "A gash has been made (in *King Lear* we think of the state as being gored, but in *Macbeth* it is a gash) and now the wound is closing" and "all the chickens [are] coming home to roost." Macbeth, up to his navel in blood and poultry, reminds us of another reprobate, Milton's Satan, who plumbs the abyss of Quinonian tautology: "His opposition to what is best in the nature of things commits him to negation and self-destruction." On the other hand, Samson (of *Samson Agonistes*) seems to Quinones quite likable. As for Milton himself, he "can be allied," according to Quinones, "with . . . Rousseau" among those who would like "more of the May Day spirit permitted that existed before the iron glove of Puritanism. . . . Against the stern rigors of Puritanical consciousness and relentless high seriousness . . . [Milton] suggests the virtues of small talk, easiness, the casual moments of pleasure. . .": evidence, if there were one word of truth in it, that Milton himself was quite a likable chap too. Yet the living frabjous end is love, careless love, in all three of its dimensions: "Petrarch, perhaps because of his children born out of wedlock, frequently felt guilt at such penetration into human experience," but those "quick bright things" Romeo and Juliet, erectly vertical if not protuberantly horizontal, demonstrate that "love makes up in height for what it lacks in length."

Quinones can get pretty explicit in his anxiety to measure up as a dingdong daddy: "[Hamlet] . . . fully characterizes [?] one large thrust of the Renaissance response to time"; "patience before man's inherent incapacities in a changing world is only occasionally lightened by the sought-for thrusts of grace"; "a major thrust . . ."; "any temporal thrust . . ."; "issues which, given more thrust . . ."; "the thrust of these cantos . . ."; "Richard II . . . possessed no real thrust." When this edgy and dynamic scholar isn't being congested by nominal thrusts, he's being harried by adjectival roots: "in the face of life's root mutability. . . ."; "still a root difference inheres"; "A root irrationality inheres in the working out of things"; "This root confidence . . ."; "more fundamentally . . . joined together by root similarities"; "a root imperfection in the world"; "a root individualism that . . . devours York's own house [an allusion to the deadly, invasive house-eating root, *Radix devorans* ssp. *quinoniensis,* a native of Patagonia]." The root thrust of all thrusts is "God's own creative thrust," which frolics like Moby Dick among the lesser tumidities: "the mysteries of God's higher hand [*hired* hand? handled herd? hare and hound?]. . ."; "Denied normal extension to their desires, the lovers . . . contract experience, bringing together in a terrible way, the womb and the tomb,

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the penis and the asp [*sic*]"; "Out of the entrails of the play itself there is no active force which we follow that leads to rejuvenation" (though this complex image may be peristaltic rather than genital); "While, like Dante, Shakespeare has a remarkable sense of the propensity of physical matter to run down, to lose its early fire, so, too, in Troilus and Hamlet, in the sonnets, and in any number of heroines, he introduces qualities which, if allowed [?], would give horizontal enlargement to the vertically aspiring will." Or Quinones ends the Montaigne chapter with a bang by turning up an unexpected shocker from his author: " 'When I dance, I dance; when I fuck, I fuck.' This is the ungentle Montaigne's sense of life with bite and reality [?]." The startled reader, unable to recover this particular explicitness from his own memory of Montaigne's text, turns to the footnote—printed, as university presses prefer, at a distance of three hundred pages from the superscript—and learns that "Of course Montaigne's actual words are here only roughly approximated. He in fact wrote, 'Quand je dance, je dance; quand je dors, je dors.' " For Quinones, then, sleeping "roughly approximates" fucking, and explicitness has gone approximately as far as the mind can boggle.

"No bromide this!" exults Quinones on another page, having emitted another bromide. No stuffed shirt he! Sex jingles like loose change in the pockets of his imbecile metaphors. As for offhand misrepresentation, it's as easy as pleasing a university press, one merely goes ahead and does it and buries the truth in a footnote. Nor could just any run-of-the-mill scholar season the graver claims [gravy stains?] of scholarship with newsy and colloquial touches, student-cafeteria scoop about youth, women, politics, psychology, and the other popular arts; but, with-it as a year-old videotape of Walter Cronkite, this is the cat that can: "A kind of 'domino theory' is operative . . . [in Spenser]"; "the stifled cry of the bored suburban housewife, 'Is it just enough [?] not to be bad?' "; "time . . . presents not a choice but an echo"; "Requited love in Shakespeare is an introduction to a sane reality, lending support to the banner, 'Make love not war' "; "The cutting from one force to another [in *Richard III*], the montage effect, as in *High Noon*, increases the dramatic suspense"; "Like every busy father . . . [Manoa] tries to exploit his pull with City Hall to get his son relieved"; "By removing his watch, and trying to regain a more natural sense of the time of his life, the young person of today actually returns to the Renaissance conception"; "Falstaff . . . courts disappointment when he seeks to insert himself between the father-son relation" (a daringly psychoanalytic and illiterate evocation of the homosexual sandwich). Between his own up-to-the-minute teacher-student relation this Falstaffian swinger inserts the prick of social conscience, the sought-for thrust of prepaved [*sic*] editorial razzmatazz that, ramming its fruitful tidings into the reader's ear on page 283 ("the contemporary American scene . . . where the explosive demands of the unjustly

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deprived challenge the order of a beleaguered establishment"), is later given horizontal enlargement as well as vertical aspirin by an almost verbatim stanifran on page 405 ("the confrontation of a beleaguered establishment with the destructive demands of the unjustly deprived").

For such a firebrand, Quinones is very grateful. "A fine critic has recently . . ."; "Consequently, A. S. P. Woodhouse is right . . ."; "Burckhardt is right . . ."; "Oliver Elton was right . . ."; Professor Benjamin is also right . . ."; "E. E. Stoll is right to declare . . ."; Harry Levin is "the scholar's scholar and the critic's critic"; "With his usual synthesizing clarity Douglas Bush in his Claremont lectures" manages to say something or other. Yes yes yes yes oh my God yes.

Quinones has literary opinions, which tend to be simultaneously conventional, uninteresting, and bizarre. We have already heard about Milton as Queen of the May. Some professor with his usual synthesizing clarity must have told Quinones once in a Spenser class that Spenser and Chaucer have everything in common, for instance surnames spelled with seven letters ending in "er"; and it's no trouble to reaffirm this most preposterous of literary couplings if one hasn't the flicker of a response to Chaucer's elasticity of diction, pace, tone, temperament, his quicksilver and impromptu manner. Quinones regards literature as a collection of truths to be extracted like wisdom teeth from the texts of the masters—say, Shakespeare's third, final, and serene period (the plateau of reconciliation), during which the Bard pauses for a last paranoid glare at the age-old question: Is uxoricidal jealousy on the whole ill-advised, especially if the lady hasn't so much as looked cross-eyed at the milkman? Quinones sees it differently, because in another classroom long ago he was told about myth and allegory:

> If the essential stages of male growth are suggested, so are those of womanhood, from Perdita's innocent natural grace to her mother's return as a middle-aged woman. Here, too, the reader is moved by an irresistible urge to respond to the mythic suggestivity of the piece. . . .

How did he fill all these pages? He has read many books and taken many notes (out of an "inner psychic need" no doubt, as he says of Othello in another connection), and much of his own distended volume is synopsis and paraphrase (excelsior and styrofoam). His thesis is vague enough to allow him to drift off in almost any direction till he jerks himself upright with an admonitory pretense of having been on course all the time, and who's to say no, since what's the course? He seems never to have questioned a literary judgment uttered by a full professor: all the classroom chestnuts are here, rolling off the page in a steady mindless rattle. He has no ideas of his own, and not

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more than two or three of anybody else's, such as the one that dithers on about how masterpieces get written by the *Zeitgeist:* "it almost seems inevitable that the century that began with Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* should terminate with *Hamlet.*" Not only can't he write acceptable English sentences; his sentences are often so bad as to disorient the wincing reader, who comes to expect any syntactical or verbal aberration whatever. According to the printed text, for instance, Macbeth is "Bellona's bridgegroom" [*sic*], and by this time—the book having obviously been approved for publication without the intervention of editors, it may also have been printed without the intervention of printers—grooming bridges seems as likely a hobby for Macbeth as Maypole dancing for Milton. "One of the byproducts of sixteenth-century . . . closed comedy," begins another skullbreaker, ". . . is the quest for equanimity in cuckoldry": the cuckold learning not to fret because, in Quinones' explanation as printed, "It is his destiny, not his dessert, to be so used"; and why shouldn't strawberry parfait with horns on it find a place among the howlers? But the book is less a personal than a collective disaster, perpetrated by the scholar's scholars and critic's critics who wrote admiring blurbs for it, by the experts who recommended that the Harvard University Press publish it, by the professional meetings at which such stuff is declaimed and applauded, by the whole shady enterprise of American literary scholarship.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Long Novels and Short Stories

I HAVE SPENT MUCH PLEASANT TIME recently rereading and teaching novels by some between-the-wars English writers: *Tarr; Women in Love; Passage to India; To the Lighthouse; A Handful of Dust; From a View to a Death.* When the superbly social voices of Auden, of Lytton Strachey, of Orwell are added to the list, it has made me wonder whether, with the exception of lyric poetry, there's any literature I'd rather talk about, especially with bright students in 1973 who act as if these books were written for them as much as for anyone. We don't spend much time laying out the design of a given novel, remembering that within reach of anyone's elbow is a casebook full of essays claiming to do just that. What the classroom situation permits us to do instead is read passages aloud and try to characterize what a reader does in response to them, what moves he makes in order satisfactorily to take in what's happening and head on to the next paragraph; beyond that, what it means to speak of Lawrence or Forster or Waugh as an active presence in these passages. Over the past few weeks, I have been alternating these now classic English voices with the latest contemporary ones—mostly American—and lamenting how seldom the new books provoked me into activity I can interestingly name.

The major time-consumer has been Alexander Solzhenitsyn, so instead of saving him for last let him stand first; not I am afraid on grounds of clear merit or units of pleasure afforded.[1] Most reviewers of *August 1914* have stressed the fact that it is but the "initial presentation" of a much longer work which Solzhenitsyn thinks may well take him twenty years, so that therefore judgment must be deferred. Yet in all fairness, it is hard to imagine how the multitude of pages to come can redeem large swatches of the book to hand. At least I do not know any other novel which strings out its endless list of characters to quite this extent, introducing new ones after three or four hundred pages have already elapsed. Somehow, we trust, all this will eventually come clear; yet the strain on even the willing reader is finally intolerable—one simply groans when, for example, Chapter 43 begins, "Terenty Chernega hardly remembered his father; he was brought up by his stepmother . . ." etc. Much of the time we barely remember a character whom we may have met ten chapters previously—or did we?

For Solzhenitsyn is a monotonous writer with little variation in the tone used to treat all subjects. Compared to *War and Peace,* and I

[1] AUGUST 1914, by *Alexander Solzhenitsyn.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $10.00.

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am not sure the comparison deserves to be made in spite of Solzhenitsyn's overt concern with Tolstoy, there is a flatness and sameness about the experience of *August 1914*. Much of the military action in Tolstoy's book takes place either after we thoroughly know some of the characters involved, or is meditated on through the comforting presence of Kutuzov. With Solzhenitsyn the word is gravity, gravity, more gravity, no matter whose character's experience is supposed to be at the center of things. There is a revealing moment in Chapter 40 when, about to deal with Russia's first and for Solzhenitsyn most significant defeat in their ill-fated invasion of Germany, the author allows himself the following piece of apologetics:

> Without allowing any more scope to one's imagination than what can be learned from precise data, preferring historians to novelists as sources, we can only spread our hands and admit it once and for all: no one would dare to write a fictional account of such unrelieved blackness; for the sake of verisimilitude, a writer would distribute the light and shade more evenly.

And this commitment to just the facts please makes for such truths as are marked by the first person plural:

> From the very first our spirits were damped and our self-assurance was never regained; from the very first, both our enemies and our allies were disappointed by our poor showing, and with the stigma of that contempt we had to battle on until we collapsed; from the very first, too, the doubt was awakened in us: did we have the right generals, did they know what they were doing?

History is stranger than fiction, but words like these take much of the imaginative strangeness out of the narrative and leave the reader with virtually nothing to do except nod automatically in sympathetic agreement: yes, you certainly have proved your case. But this way listlessness lies.

On the credit side there are good portraits of the heroic General Samsonov who nobly pays the full price for his and others' mistakes; of Colonel Vorotsynev who lives through the battle and comes back to try and make truth known; of the Ferapontych family who come on early in the book, then disappear, no doubt to be seen again later; and of the student Sanya whom the opening chapters introduce, whose hero is Tolstoy, and who is later shown (in a finely-rendered scene) with a fellow student taking leave of Moscow in preparation for their army life. On the debit side, a number of "camera eye" and newspaper headline inserts that provide a kind of warmed-over Dos Passos atmosphere. Yet it must be said that Solzhenitsyn admits in his foreword to the difficulty of "retelling history" and asks with

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future volumes in mind for the "cooperation of readers who still remember the period." Perhaps then in view of this admirable man's enormous labors, it does not greatly matter that my own activity as a reader of fiction is severely limited.

On the surface it appears that the perfect novelist to strike off unlimited sparks would be Nabokov, and one needs to go through the new short novel twice before things begin to fall into place.[2] Not that having them fall in place makes everything transparently clear: John Updike, in his *New Yorker* review, allows to not understanding it (though he doesn't blame the book for this) and I don't claim to be a better reader of Nabokov than Updike. But for all the admiration and loving care he has directed toward the explicating and appreciating of the Master's novels, Updike sounds a bit uneasy this time. Rightly so, for *Transparent Things* carries further into compressed and urgent stylistic parody the main tendencies of Nabokov's last novel, *Ada;* while by the same token it makes seem more remote, since it is discontinuous with, the attractive imaginative generosity animating his best novels: *Lolita, Pnin, Pale Fire.* This generosity was surely fed by Nabokov's fascination with America (a love-affair, it has been called) and the marvelous small-town landscapes—dotted with dotty, middle Americans—of *Pnin* and *Lolita* are given glory through the stolid single-mindedness of Timofey or the obsessed impatience of Humbert; while *Pale Fire* always struck me as split between the rich comedy of Kinbote stalking Shade in New Wye and the tedious fantasies about what did or didn't happen in mythical Zembla. These novels were unabashedly fictions, as self-consciously and ingeniously parodic as anyone could wish, but they also existed at the level of comic realism. With *Ada,* and now *Transparent Things,* that level is at the vanishing point. The erotic flights in *Lolita* were surely Nabokovian but also seemed truly to emanate from an imagined not-so-humble Humbert. But in *Ada* we got this, as Van is set upon by Lucette and Ada: "Lucette's dewy little contributions augmented rather than dampened Van's invariable reaction to the only and main girl's lightest touch, actual or imagined. Ada, her silky mane sweeping over his nipples and navel, seemed to enjoy doing everything to jolt my present pencil . . ." See, I'm a writer, these are my imagined creations, look what I can make them do.

I could not finish *Ada,* and though no such problem occurred with *Transparent Things* the final result was not happier. The hero, "Hugh Person" (you, person) is constantly played with and harassed by the brilliant word-man who conducts, with side excursions into various transparencies, the narration. As always there is fine Nabokovian contempt at the expense of new fashions, as when Hugh attends an avant garde play craftily titled *Cunning Stunts:*

[2] TRANSPARENT THINGS, by *Vladimir Nabokov.* McGraw-Hill. $5.95.

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> In matters of art, "avant garde" means little more than conforming to some daring philistine fashion, so, when the curtain opened, Hugh was not surprised to be regaled with the sight of a naked hermit sitting on a cracked toilet in the middle of an empty stage. Julia giggled, preparing for a delectable evening. Hugh was moved to enfold in his shy paw the childish hand that had accidentally touched his kneecap.

The hermit on the toilet is vintage Nabokov, but has nothing at all to do with Hugh, while the "shy paw" is a stage prop left over from *Lolita* that sounds authentic when Humbert speaks of it but just feels embarrassing and patronizing here. Nabokov is interested in the transparencies of history, of memory, of love, and above all else of language; but as far as this novel goes his interest in character, in human beings, is imperiously disdainful or frothily indulgent. What are we to do with a "hero" whose toleration of his wife's sexual preferences is described in this manner:

> Our Person's capacity to condone all this . . . endears him to us, but also provokes limpid mirth, alas, at times. For example, he told himself that she refused to strip because she was shy of her tiny pouting breasts and the scar of a ski accident along her thigh. Silly Person!
>
> Was she faithful to him throughout the months of their marriage spent in frail, lax, merry America? During their first and last winter there she went a few times to ski without him, at Aval Quebec, or Chute, Colorado. . . . although actually, as we know, she had enjoyed full conjunction with only a dozen crack lovers in the course of three trips.

Of course we don't know, and do we care a bit? But with Lolita we did care; "frail, lax, merry America" was something more than a happy *trouvaille,* just as the fates of poor Luzhin (*The Defence*) or mad Kinbote (*Pale Fire*) endeared them to us as something more, though never independent of, their creator's splendid use of language. *Transparent Things* is too transparently a fiction, all made up: the reader feels lonely and hopeless because there's nothing for him to care about except Nabokov brilliantly all alone with his magic.

Looking Back on the Sixties Department

This will be short but unpleasant, unless you like that sort of thing. Writing to Aldous Huxley on the publication of *Point Counter Point,* D. H. Lawrence commended him for showing the truth "about you and your generation" then went on to add "But what a moment! and what a state! if you can only palpitate to murder, suicide, and rape

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. . . however are we going to live through our days? Preparing still another murder, suicide, and rape? But it becomes of a phantasmal boredom and produces ultimately inertia, inertia, inertia and final atrophy of the feelings." What possible words would Lawrence have left for three late-entries into or perhaps hangovers from the last five years of fictional debauch?[3] Craig Nova's first novel won the Harper-Saxton Award and is advertised as a "strong, frightening and (oddly enough) funny book." It begins in the following manner:

> Her yellow teeth were hard. I know: they gnaw my fingers as I try to catch the slippery tongue. She looks surprised, then collapses like a palsied guard, strikes her head against the glass tabletop. A swollen and peevish face, so much like a formaldehyde child's. I think of bits of floating flesh, a scene from some snowy paperweight.
>
> Don't eat yourself, I think, don't swallow it.
>
> Her rigid flesh bounces against the floor, over slivers as sharp and clear as bits of shattered icicle. I mop greenish froth and blood with an awkward bit of toilet paper, but bits of glass cling to it, cut her face.

To get your novel off to a good strong start there's nothing like a spot of epilepsy. *Turkey Hash* continues to be frightening, but I never (oddly enough) found it a funny book. Lots of action though. For the funny stuff you can go to Steve Katz, whose previous publications might be said to have prepared us for the latest, titled in that inimitable late-Sixties way. *Saw* is filled with loving evocations of the very stuff as dreams are made on:

> Three women whose faces look like they've been mashed into the sidewalk lick off their fingers that they have dipped into the avocado soup. They empty bags of garbage on her table and feel around in it for tidbits to stuff in the mouths of their red-eyed kids. "A silent butler," one man with a huge wen on his neck exclaims, and he empties a plastic sack of gray-green slop on her stereo turntable, yanks the wires out, and spins the mess on his lap, slurping up fistfuls and licking his lips.

Of course this is quoted out of context. The most moving moment in the book occurs when Eileen, whom you get to know and cherish, is made love to by a Sphere (by a *sphere*) she's met I believe in the neighborhood of Van Cortlandt Park. And of course there are nostalgic bits that catch you up when Steve refers to his earlier books, those old-time favorites *Creamy & Delicious* and *The Exagggerations of Peter Prince*. But Katz is surely his own best critic. Not so Rudolph

[3] TURKEY HASH, by *Craig Nova*. Harper & Row. $6.96. SAW, by *Steve Katz*. Alfred A. Knopf. $3.50. QUAKE, by *Rudolph Wurlitzer*. E. P. Dutton. $4.95.

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Wurlitzer who has had outside help, notably from Thomas Pynchon and Donald Barthelme, the former of whom proclaimed on publication of Wurlitzer's first novel, *Nog,* that "The novel of Bullshit is dead" while the sly wag Barthelme praised it as "an excellent book, full of unhealthy mental excitement." Since *Nog* Wurlitzer has given us *Flats,* the only novel ever written where American cities do what they've always wanted to: "Houston sat up and peered at the field"; "Duluth slowly took off his remaining shoe and sock." Now with *Quake* ("a testament to man's ability to struggle for life with humor and courage") he has successfully achieved Lawrence's accurate prediction of the "phantasmal boredom" and "final atrophy of the feelings," above all of the "inertia, inertia, inertia" that's built into the texture of every sentence. There has been, we are told, an earthquake in Los Angeles; so the anonymous "I" takes us tonelessly through one harrowing horror after another. By page 135 we are really into it:

> He moved to the other side of the fire. Feet shuffled up to me. Catsup and mustard were spread over my body and into my hair. Whisky was poured over my face and down to my crotch. I was tickled and prodded. I felt a weight on my stomach and I tried to sit up but I was kicked back to the ground.

Just a minor painless sample of the thrills awaiting you in *Quake.* Who is Rudolph Wurlitzer and why does he like them to do such terrible things to him? Contradicting Pynchon, we can admit that on the evidence of this new book the novel of Bullshit is not dead at all but humorlessly alive as ever, Wurlitzer's work being an egregious instance of it. Or maybe Lawrence has had his day and the novel is no longer the one bright book of life?

Bright book, at least in comparison to these three absurdist fantasies, was a strange first novel called *Margins*[4] whose hero lives out of a locker in Grand Central (which would seem an excellent way to get along in The City) and spends his days and nights moving from Canal Street to Riverside Drive, accompanied by a recently purchased chain saw and a copy of Camus, bent on following out mysterious, absolutely compelling obsessions. Perhaps it was no more than the topography which interested me here—the Strand Bookstore, Times Square pornography, Mott St. eatery—but such topography isn't common in novels these days (where have you read about well-specified New York or Boston recently?) so I plugged along good-naturedly. David Kranes knows where, as the phrase has it, the bodies are buried; I hope he puts his city-knowledge to work in the service next time of a more substantial action. At a jollier level Robert DeMaria is at least as readable as Kranes; his hero lives on

[4] MARGINS, by *David Kranes.* Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

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East Eleventh St. and works for a publishing house:[5]

> I play midwife to ambitious but starving little academicians, who are convinced that they can achieve instant success and write their rotten philosophical novels by publishing dreary handbooks and anthologies for Freshman English courses. It is embarrassing for them and amusing for me that they should write so badly. I correct their mistakes and take them to lunch, where invariably they get drunk on the one martini that they can not afford not to order since the lunch is free. They tell me all about their fantastically boring Ph.D. dissertations . . .

This charming fellow wants nothing more than to marry the right girl, but first must get rid of his rich mother so she won't disinherit him. The mother's name is Gertrude, and there is much play with Hamlet, bearable only because of DeMaria's ability to endow his hero with hair-trigger sexual fantasies and underground dreams. The breezy tone through which they're experienced and, again as with Kranes, the expertise in moving around New York and Long Island, kept me turning the pages. DeMaria's Satyr likes Camus (as does the hero of *Margins*) but rather than chain-saws he goes for professional football and masturbation as other favorites. Maybe this is a novel for perpetual male adolescents. Speak up wherever you are.

Anne Roiphe's well-publicized female novel is grindingly up-to-date in that her scrappy narrator is a Woman bent on getting a Divorce from that Son-of-a-Bitch she spent those years with.[6] But let Anne Roiphe put it in her own words:

> What I'm doing in this car flying down these screaming highways is getting my tail to Juarez so I can legally rid myself of the crummy son-of-a-bitch who promised me a tomorrow like a yummy fruitcake and delivered instead wilted lettuce, rotted cucumber, a garbage of a life. I'm not going gently into this divorce, but yelling and kicking all the way with blood and skin under my fingernails and hate balled up inside like a gallstone fouling up my vital functions. There are millions of bitter ladies running in little circles around this continent. . . .

A number of whom are writing novels about their crummy husbands. I would like to know whether it was originally husband or wife who thought up that yummy fruitcake simile, or whether I can just blame Anne Roiphe for it. At any rate, in a word that belongs in the above paragraph, the narrative tone is lousy, and it is hard to feel sorry for the on-the-road divorcée even when her child falls into a chocolate

[5] THE SATYR, by *Robert DeMaria*. Bobbs-Merrill. $5.95.
[6] LONG DIVISION, by *Anne Roiphe*. Simon & Schuster. $5.95.

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vat in Hershey, Pa. (When I visited Hershey my mother managed to keep us clean.) As I understand it Anne Roiphe wants to get points both for imagining a tough, righteously burned-up ex-wife who was married to a painter-slob Howard (who had his "work"), but also for writing a cautionary tale about how it's a cruel world for gals on their own. I counted no less than three males who try to sell our heroine a piece of pornography; each time she buys and it turns out to be fake. Should we blame the men or praise them for their fundamental cleanliness? There is also a flat tire which she can't fix (I couldn't even unscrew the lugs last time I tried) and the awful white male who stops to help is not only a Minuteman but of such incompetence that he knocks out the jack and breaks his foot. Which just goes to show, I guess, that you can never trust a man. But that ex-husband really must have been a pill, so we gather from poignant little mother-daughter exchanges: " 'Daddy isn't interested in politics,' she said, 'He says it's the same no matter what happens.' 'Yes,' I said, 'That's what he thinks.' " The crummy son-of-a-bitch.

Lois Gould on the other hand is a writer who refuses to be a Woman Writer but just writes good.[7] Or maybe it's that with *Such Good Friends* she managed to get her crummy husband off her back. That first novel read so effortlessly and brightly that I nervously reached for the word "slick" but have since decided it was simply a good book. *Necessary Objects* isn't nearly as much fun, doesn't have the virtue going for it of a clever put-upon central intelligence, and is maybe too conventional in its commitment to story—the lives and loves of four New York Jewish sisters. But by just paying attention to the writing you can see how accomplished Lois Gould is; at least I assume this opening will pass any Taxi-Cab Driver's Test for 'Fiction':

> In this aurora-pinkish lighting, everyone said, even the *boeuf en gelée* looked younger. And so at first glance the Lowen sisters had a way of gleaming like a controversial portrait of some exiled royal family. Luminous cultured-pearl faces loosely fastened to the black velour banquette. And wearing those faintly significant smiles during the seating process, in case anyone had forgotten the line of succession since their last public appearance.

Things later on are never quite as handsomely settled as in this opening; in fact Lois Gould has trouble holding the narrative firmly in hand as she moves from one sister to another. But that matters less than the evidence given of all sorts of resources, sympathies, a mind not about to be violated by your latest chic idea. Nobody's going to rave about *Necessary Objects,* including me, but I'm nonetheless con-

[7] NECESSARY OBJECTS, by *Lois Gould*. Random House. $6.95.

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vinced that its author will go on to produce more serious and intelligent novels.

Two experimental books: one trivial, the other something else.[8] Why would you want to write a novel in which you pretended to be somebody named Jeffrey Cartwright who was writing a book about the life and death (at age 11) of some made-up author called Edwin Mullhouse? You'll have to direct that question to the author of it all, Steven Millhauser, who recalls through his narrator how when he was a year old and Edwin six months the latter essayed various "bolder adventures in the realm of sound":

> I refer not so much to his intricate belches and exquisite winds as to his astonishing salivary achievements. How I long to convey to the adult reader his breathtaking combinations of the buzz and drool, his dribbles and drizzles, his bubbles and burbles—whole salivary sonatas enhanced by gushing crescendos and hissing fortissimi, gurgling glissandi and trickling pianissimi, streaming prestissimos, spouting arpeggios, those slurps and slops, those drips and drops, those spluttering splattering splurts of sputum and drippy splish-splashings of melodious spittle.

Knopf wrote a special publisher's note telling us how excited they were by all this, then warning us that "It is also a book about language," as if we could miss it after a passage like the above. Just saying that a novel is "about language" should be enough to encourage our committing it instantly to the flames since it will likely contain but sophistry and illusion. The present one seems to me a long exercise in oh-too-exquisite condescension.

I am not yet quite sure what to call *The Sunlight Dialogues,* indeed am not sure how good a novel I think it is. Thomas R. Edwards' excellent review of it (*N.Y. Times Book Review,* Dec. 10) makes high claims for it as a philosophical novel, and the review should be looked up for its discussion of the book's elaborate and ambitious scheme. In one crude sentence: a madman or genius or magician called The Sunlight Man descends on Batavia N.Y., disrupts the law and order precariously upheld by its enforcers headed by Police Chief Clumly, engages the chief and members of the Hodge family (of which the Sunlight Man is a black-sheep member) in philosophical dialogue and desperate violence; eventually—a very long eventually—things work themselves into death and destruction, the law-and-order man is touched and shaken by what he's heard of the possibilities for rebellion, from ancient Babylon to America, 1966. But even Edwards admits that the Sunlight Man is sort of a bore; that you

[8] EDWIN MULLHOUSE: The Life and Death of an American Writer 1943-1954, by Jeffrey Cartwright, by *Steven Millhauser.* Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95. THE SUNLIGHT DIALOGUES, by *John Gardner.* Alfred A. Knopf. $8.95.

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put up with him for the sake of other things the book does superbly: the richly evoked past and present of Genessee County in upstate New York, and the intensely dramatized histories of the Hodge family and of Chief Clumly and his wife. John Gardner's rendering of Buffalo, Batavia, the lights of Attica Prison (he must have been writing this book well before we knew about Attica) is as full and authentic as are the voices of his realized characters. Yet, to carp a bit, when on page 639 of the 700 big-paged novel there is the sentence in reference to Melville's *Pierre*—"It was a stupid novel, it was a brilliant novel"—I stopped for a moment. Gardner's novel is surely not stupid, is surely brilliant, but maybe not quite human either. *Light in August* comes to Batavia N.Y. was the formula that sprung to mind; there is a ruthlessness about the whole conception which made me hold off from full assent. But the important thing is to give this book a chance: don't take it up unless you mean business. However brilliant or stupid you may find it, it has a place somewhere down the line from Melville and James and Faulkner and other American writers of impossible books. So for exactly that reason it's not to be overlooked.

Some collections of stories:[9] I am unhappy not to have gotten hold of Paul Theroux's novels in time to have read them while considering his shorter pieces. The stories take place in various odd spots—Singapore, Russia, Amherst, Mass.—but that fact doesn't suggest how various they are in tone and in their ways of smashingly concluding, or not concluding, the short flight. Three stories may represent Theroux's range; the first, called "A Love Knot," traces the fortunes of an Indian from Calcutta living in Boston and filled with romantic literary notions of the city. Its opening paragraph immediately establishes a strong narrator:

> On rainy nights in that part of Boston, the Charles Street area, antique gas lamps lighted the narrow side streets which were swollen with a paving of cobblestones. Like the lamps, the stones had been left intact, and they were so carefully preserved in a way that caused such inconvenience that the nostalgia they represented was vulgar, an obnoxious pride. There was no love in it. It is that way with keeping old things: they are flaunted and handled and gaped at. Collectors and conservers are arrogant; many Bostonians are that way, and several I knew flinched when I told them how I had once seen my cousin tear the brass guts out of an expensive Victorian oil lamp and solder in a light socket. . . .

This is not *The Bostonians,* nor Howells, but the ruminations are so firmly devoid of hot-satiric shots that one carefully follows the track

[9] SINNING WITH ANNIE, by *Paul Theroux*. Houghton-Mifflin. $5.95. SADNESS, by *Donald Barthelme*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $5.95. THE TEMPTATION OF JACK ORKNEY AND OTHER STORIES, by *Doris Lessing*. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95. MUSEUMS AND WOMEN, by *John Updike*. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

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of the narrator as he tracks a mysterious girl. Then there is the comic music-hall Theroux of "Notes for Four American Poets," about the always-possible disaster of them poets getting together in Amherst and arguing about Frost, who one of the four is insisting never "recited" his poems to anyone:

> "I heard him," said Gold. "At the Y.M.H.A. Then at Trilling's. I *heard* him recite his poems, I'm telling you. 'Boiches,' for example."
>
> "Frost never recited his poems," Parsons continued, as if Gold had not said anything. "Frost used to . . . *say* . . . his poems. Am I right, Denton?"
>
> "Absolutely, Wilbur. That's what he called it." Denton Fuller jutted his jaw out and said in a rasping voice, "I am now going to say a poem called 'Desert Places.' "
>
> "He never *recited,* he always *said* his poems," Parsons recited.
>
> "Said, read," Gold muttered. "It's pretty cute, pretty stagy."
>
> "Would you put your *Hitler Riddles* next to *A Boy's Will?*" Parsons challenged.

Theroux knows his Frost well enough to make something funny instead of just vulgar out of the parody; it was about time somebody did something with that business of Saying a Poem. The talk in these stories is sharp and dialectical, as when in "Dog Days" the White English teacher in Singapore hears from a wise Indian that "I take hand of women and I squeeze and look in eyes, and if she return look and do not take hand away, I know I can make intercourse." To which the interested American answers, asked about how we do it over here,

> "In the States?" Len Rowley thought a moment. "I don't know. I suppose we just come out and ask the girl if she wants to."
>
> "Just looking and saying, 'Cheerio, let us make intercourse'?"

So the story begins, with that "Cheerio" just enough to make the reader a believer. Most of these stories operate wholly on the surface, are "superficial" in the good sense; it's not surprising to note that Theroux is a good critic of other novelists since those critical energies are on excellent display in his own fiction.

Though I would never want, in Pope's phrase, to hurt a man that's rising in the trade, it seems to me less than devastating of a reputation to pronounce Donald Barthelme to be at the height of his powers, then to add that I can't for the life of me take much pleasure in their supple exercise. Barthelme has had an easy ride to the top, has been thrust upon us week after *New Yorker* week, is as inevitable as the Steinberg creations I'm also supposed to admire. Do people come

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home from a hard day at the office and relax with the latest Barthelme?

> Now Perpetua was living alone. She had told her husband that she didn't want to live with him any longer.
>
> "Why not?" he had asked.
>
> "For all the reasons you know," she said.
>
> Harold's farewell gift was a Blue Cross-Blue Shield insurance policy, paid up for one year. Now Perpetua was putting valve oil on her trumpet. One of the valves was sticking. She was fourth-chair trumpet with the New World Symphony Orchestra.

This seems to me solid middle-level Barthelme and contains something offensive in every sentence, from the original mock-naive "Now," to the heroine's clever name, to the mock-simplicity of the second dragged-out sentence, to the pretence that Harold and Perpetua really did have that exchange, to the fact that he is named Harold, to the feeble, proud-of-itself bit about Blue Cross. And then the trumpet, and valve oil, and to have a girl play trumpet and fourth-chair in the "New World Symphony Orchestra" (you've heard of the symphony, fans, but let's pretend it's the name of an orch, wow!). At this point in the narrative I, relaxing, would turn on Dvořák or Cronkite, or just have supper.[10]

Barthelme is really very sweet: the shy-making, bearded picture of him on the jacket makes clear he's not one to disturb anybody. He is also Mr. Clean, absolutely no sexual bothersomeness, and I shouldn't think an admirer of, say, Lenny Bruce's comedy would find much sustenance here. But listen to him (who?) talk about the moon rocks:

> The moon rocks gave off a slight hum, which cleaned your teeth, and a brilliant glow, which absolved you from sin. The moon rocks whistled *Finlandia,* by Jean Sibelius, while reciting *The Confessions of St. Augustine,* by I. F. Stone. . . . They were better than a movie in which the President refuses to tell the people what to do to save themselves from the terrible thing that is about to happen, although he knows what ought to be done and has written a secret memorandum about it.

Is there a thoughtful message here about our society? Does Barthelme show us, as a reviewer put it, the desperateness of our plight? Is that mention of *Finlandia* supposed to arouse mirth at the expense of the discredited Finn's piece? (But try it in the Toscanini recording.)

[10] Or leaf through the collected early works of Edward Gorey, matchless cartoonist and poet, beginning with *The Unstrung Harp or, Mr. Earbrass Writes a Novel.* This one and fourteen others are now available together in AMPHIGOREY, by *Edward Gorey.* G. P. Putnam's. $12.95.

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Augustine and I. F. Stone, yes, and something deeper in the crack about the President? I can only imagine the satisfied reader of a Barthelme story, or "story," if I then go on to grim thoughts of what reading, or "reading," has come to. After all, there are those many good Trollope novels yet to be tested. The elegant trifling of this collection is perhaps a judgment on us all, and on *The New Yorker,* though as somebody who reads the magazine for Rovere or Pauline Kael or Whitney Balliett I refuse to share collective guilt.

I was so much happier and safer reading Doris Lessing's stories from the past seven years than lurching around *The Four-Gated City* and *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* (the novels published during that time) that I will single out three of them, successful to one degree or another, in all of which she writes as if R. D. (Ronny) Laing didn't exist. The stories have Lawrence, and his own variousness, behind them; although Doris Lessing is herself throughout. "A Year in Regent's Park" is not a story at all, only a beautifully observed, leisured account of what one's English garden (yard to us) looks like over the course of the seasons. It looks different, and the narrator's flexible, interested voice does a marvelous job at registering the differences. Of course Lawrence's example in this regard is not inconsiderable. But a more challengingly Lawrentian piece, especially since it outdoes him in candor and irony, is the justly-named "Not a Very Nice Story" (which is not a very nasty story either) about the sexual fortunes of two closely-involved couples over the rhythm of the years. Doris Lessing's approach to Frederick and Althea and Henry and Muriel is external, but even though she begins with the suspicious disclaimer that "This story is difficult to tell" you end up feeling, yes I see what you mean. For there don't emerge moralistic or knowingly psychological judgments of the characters, none of whom we're invited to pity or "understand." A typical moment of omniscient summary sounds like this:

> All four, of course, would sometimes wonder if they should have married at all, in the way everyone does; and all four would discuss with themselves and with each other, or as a foursome, the ghastliness of marriage as an institution and how it should be abolished and something else put in its place.

There is some hypocrisy here but the nice thing is that Doris Lessing isn't out to show it up, doesn't jump for the clever capping comment, doesn't find that what she has to tell is too easily told. This reticent manoeuvering is what makes the difference between realism and slickness.

It is the impressive title story which, despite the manifest seriousness and human centrality of its "content" (a middle-aged leftist undergoes his father's death, sees his brother and sister again, worries

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about his own wife, children and political commitments, thinks about religion and the something deeper) has glaring, and I think Lawrentian, weaknesses that suggest why there is a grey lack of exhilaration surrounding some of the best of Doris Lessing's work. At a crucial point Jack Orkney meditates on his radical son's inability to profit by his own (Jack's) mistakes:

> What he could not endure was that his sons, all of them, would have to make the identical journey he and his contemporaries had made, to learn precisely the lessons exactly as if they had never been learned before.
>
> Here, at precisely this point, was the famous "generation gap"; here it had always been. It was not that the young were unlike their parents, that they blazed new trails, thought new thoughts, displayed new forms of courage: on the contrary, they behaved exactly like their parents, thought as they had—and, exactly like their parents, could not listen to this simple message: that it had all been done before. . . .
>
> But this time the "gap" was much worse because a new kind of despair had entered into the consciousness of mankind; things were too desperate, the future of humanity depended upon humanity being able to achieve new forms of intelligence. . . .

H. G. Wells or C. P. Snow? When Lawrence (in *St. Mawr*) forgets Lou Witt and launches into a sermon on the encroachment of Evil one at least is fascinated by the way the novelist nakedly expresses his obsession, even though the "story" is suspended for three pages. The trouble with Doris Lessing's imperious takeover of her character here, is that the meditation sounds so impeccably good and true that it reads like a bit from somebody's speech about Our Times. But I think the problem is less with the commonplaceness of the sensible thinking, than with the greyness of style that coats it all: "As he read, he conscientiously examined what he thought: was this changing at all? No . . ."; "He sat, carefully checking his responses: he was more in sympathy with Simone Weil, because of her relations with the poor, less with Teilhard de Chardin who seemed to him not very different from any sort of intellectual. . . ." This is disastrously close to Hemingway's parody in *The Torrents of Spring:* "Yogi was worried. There was something on his mind. It was spring, there was no doubt of that now, and he did not want a woman. . . . Decidedly something was wrong. Was he going to pieces? Was this the end?" To get away with this as art, there needs to be a more controversial, a more challengingly odd voice than Doris Lessing displays in these quotations and in the story as a whole. Her recent work has displayed two main attitudes: liberal, sensitive revisionism on the one hand; experimental journeys into far-out psychic reaches on the other.

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Surely the books to come will try to mediate these impulses, to her lively benefit as an artist.

And finally Updike, about whom a reliable friend has warned me not to say in print that I would rather read him than *Anna Karenina*. So I desist, but next to Doris Lessing's passage about the "generation gap" put this paragraph from "Solitaire," one of the fine stories from Updike's new collection. The solitaire player has been thinking about his parents and how he became a sort of father to them:

> And now the father of others. Odd, he thought, setting a black nine below a red ten, how thoroughly our lives are devoted to doing the contrary of what our parents did. He had married early, to escape the farm, and had rapidly given his wife children, to make his escape irrevocable. Also he had wished to spare his children the responsibility and terror of solitude. He wondered if they loved him as he had loved his father, wondered what depth of night sky would be displayed to them by his removal. To some extent he was already removed. . . . Slowly he had come to see that children are not our creations but our guests, people who enter the world by our invitations but with their smiles and dispositions already prepared in some mysterious other room.

This is not only true and sad, but beautiful, cadencing as aptly to the ear as it completes its statement to the mind. The reader—this one at least—is irresistibly drawn in, made to experience the meditation from within rather than, as in the Lessing passage, having it laid on from without. "Solitaire" like some of the best stories in this collection is about a man and the women in his life: mother, wife, mistress, the three of whom are displayed (as is the woman on the dustjacket) in the title story, against the backdrops of various museums. (In that one the museums are wonderful, the meditation perhaps a bit strained.)

At times, as in the last five stories in the book collectively titled "The Maples," Updike's comic talents are on display (remember that *Rabbit Redux* was filled with harsh and good jokes). The sexual game or war between husband and wife is sometimes looked at coolly and amusedly, at other times, as Updike moves into the husband's head, with momentary desperation, but always in the end coming to some sort of compromised, momentary stay against the confusion which the next story is about to introduce. But the Maples stories are disturbing too inasmuch as, unless I misconceive the mode of presentation, there is no trusty narrator helping us to weigh the exact proportions of seriousness and levity we are to assign these happenings. And so the endings are sometimes too brilliant endings, as when in "The Taste of Metal" after Richard Maple, drunk, has an accident driving home from a party and his wife goes to summon

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the police, the other woman in the front seat embraces him and "They were still in each other's arms when the whirling blue light of the police car broke upon them."

Cleverly, splendidly managed as these Maples stories are, I found myself more drawn to ones earlier in the collection where nothing happens outside the musing retrospection of a narrator. These "stories" don't feel like Stories; are instead in the tradition of meditative spinoffs Updike has been practicing in *Pigeon Feathers* and *The Music School.* At times, as in the wonderful "When Everyone Was Pregnant," the mode is telegraphic stream-of-thought bringing back the Fifties:

> Can never be revisited, that time when everyone was pregnant guiltlessly.
>
> Guiltlessness. Our fat Fifties cars, how we loved them, revved them: no thought of pollution. Exhaust smoke, cigarette smoke, factory smoke. Romance of consumption at its height. . . . A smug conviction that the world was doomed. . . .
>
> How young we were. The men scrawny as boys. Laughable military haircuts: the pea-brain look. The women with bangs and lipsticked smiles. We looked drunk. Sometimes we were.

More often Updike turns his visionary powers on domesticity, seen through right down to the very plumbing—and that's no metaphor—on which our houses and lives depend. The story with that title has the plumber recommend a new pump, promising that "you'll never have to worry with it again. It'll outlast your time here." And the story ends but doesn't snappily conclude:

> My time, his time. His eyes open wide in the unspeaking presence of corrosion and flow. We push out through the bulkhead; a blinding piece of sky slides into place above us, fitted with temporary, timeless clouds. All around us, we are outlasted.

It occurred to me that perhaps with these stories Updike has written himself into some tight corner, has moved deeper into the house, the past, the contemplative address to oneself. All the better it will be then to see him escape. He is a religious writer; he is a comic realist; he knows what everything feels like, how everything works. He is putting together a body of work which in substantial intelligent creation will eventually be seen as second to none in our time. "Do you really think he's *that* good?" a voice will say, has said. I do, I really do.

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ROGER SALE

Lionel Trilling

LIONEL TRILLING IS PROBABLY AS FAMOUS NOW as he was twenty years ago, but unless I am much mistaken, his reputation is nowhere near as high as it was in the fifties, the years of *The Liberal Imagination* and *The Opposing Self*, and the little essays for the Reader's Subscription. Back then, if this country had a leading literary critic, or, more precisely, a leading literary spokesman, it was Trilling. He was at the center of a number of concentric circles important to the literary intellectual life of the country. He was a famous and respected teacher at Columbia. He was widely known in American universities, and perhaps was the only critic frequently read by historians, philosophers, social and natural scientists. He was one of the best known "New York intellectuals," by which was usually meant "Columbia" or "the *Partisan Review* crowd," a group sufficiently coherent in its cultural and political centrality that its enemies, especially the younger ones, always knew who to attack when they wanted to strike their father dead.

Those days are long gone. Liberalism no longer has a near monopoly on intelligence; the *Partisan Review* is just another journal; the categories "Jewish intellectual" and "young Jewish novelist" no longer are rallying terms of hate, respect, and envy; teaching by means of the formal lecture is much less prevalent and is considered much less desirable, and courses that assume the centrality of Western Culture no longer dominate the curriculum. All these facts serve in varying degrees to deny Trilling the place he once had. His is not a voice that one could expect to adapt itself easily to the sixties, and now that the sixties are almost as dead as the fifties, no one seems to be rediscovering him, finding out that he was right all along, or doing much more than vaguely wondering if he is still alive. A dozen years ago I gave a group of undergraduates some passages from Trilling's *Matthew Arnold* for comment. There was, as I remember, a shuffling of voices and feet. Well, yes, Trilling didn't do very much, and Arnold seemed mostly a hatrack on which Trilling was neatly piling the sombreros of all the best know names in the West. But no one could ever say that straight out, or even directly agree with it, and under my prodding the students got sullen with me rather than articulate about Trilling. Last year I gave a group of graduate students—people temperamentally much more cautious and respectful—the same passages, and they just hooted, not with the glee that one associates with the discovery that the emperor is not wearing clothes, but with the

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more casual derision that accompanies the question, "Who does this guy think he is, anyway?"

Well, admittedly *Matthew Arnold* is not the best Trilling. After that book he never again attempted to sustain a long consecutive argument, and he discovered that perhaps his most congenial form is the lecture. The voice of *The Liberal Imagination, The Opposing Self,* and *Beyond Culture* speaks from a lectern: here is a subject, a problem, a matter for an hour's serious thought, let us see what we can say about it. His latest book, *Sincerity and Authenticity,* is an attempt to carry on a single argument through a series of lectures given at Harvard a couple of years ago.[1] The voice is still strong, sure of its centrality despite the events of the last twenty years, and if reading Trilling in bulk does bear certain affinities with eating a meal consisting entirely of Thousand Island dressing, it cannot be said that the years have really taken much toll. Trilling is calm, measured, judicious, generous, as always, and he continues precisely to make the kinds of distinctions he was always most interested in making. One need feel no embarrassment—such as one feels reading the later Eliot, Leavis, or C. S. Lewis—while reading *Sincerity and Authenticity;* whatever he was good for, Lionel Trilling is good for still. That last sentence implies a question I must try to answer later; but first, a look at these lectures.

Anyone who teaches the literature of the last few centuries has had to talk to students about the question of "sincerity." Is Cleopatra "sincere" when she offers her hand to Caesar's messenger to be kissed? Is Marvell *ever* "sincere"? When Clarissa says she wants only to submit to the reasonable will of her father, does she mean it? Etc. Trilling's opening answer is good:

> We cannot say of the patriarch Abraham that he was a sincere man. That statement must seem only comical. The sincerity of Achilles or Beowulf cannot be discussed: they neither have nor lack sincerity. But if we ask whether the young Werther is really as sincere as he intends to be, or which of the two Dashwood sisters, Elinor or Marianne, is thought by Jane Austen to be the more truly sincere, we can confidently expect a serious response in the form of opinions on both sides of the question.

The rest of the opening lecture is good too. When "society" was invented, when Machiavels traipsed stages of theatres and countries, when villainy became associated with duplicity, when plain speaking became possible and plain speakers could be applauded or laughed at, the question of "sincerity" became a real issue. The more some people simulated selves, and others dissimulated "sincere" selves,

[1] SINCERITY AND AUTHENTICITY, by *Lionel Trilling.* Harvard University Press. $7.95.

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the more threats there were both to the society and to the individual attempting rightly to perceive the world around him.

One ideal that such an age will foster is that to be found in Shakespeare's late plays:

> The hope that animates this normative vision of the plays is the almost shockingly elementary one which Ferdinand utters in *The Tempest*—the hope of 'quiet days, fair issue, and long life.' It is reiterated by Juno in Prospero's pageant: 'Honour, riches, marriage blessing,/Long continuance and increasing.' It has to do with good harvests and full barns and the qualities of affluent decorum that Ben Jonson celebrated in Penshurst and Marvell in Appleton House. . . .

But as society became less whole and real, that ideal tended to become the lynchpin of a reactionary, hypocritical, "insincere" aristocracy, and the ideal that replaced it became more fragmented and confused, given to multiple and complicated tones in order "sincerely" to respond to society. In the second lecture Trilling is at his best. True, he consistently uses his familiar lineup of Big Names—Rousseau, Diderot, Hegel, Goethe—but Trilling knows these figures well, and he is very convincing at outlining the shifts they show us in moral consiciousness. Empson, writing about the history of the word "honest" in the same period, is perhaps better than Trilling at this kind of thing, because he can catch more odd and partial tones, but Trilling is always assured and accurate when he retells the history of High Culture, and if such a history can show us the modern consciousness becoming born, Trilling can do the showing.

But at this point Trilling relaxes just when he should have been most cautious and vigilant. When he comes to the nineteenth century he conveniently shifts the focus from the "sincere" to the "authentic," and this allows him to go skating over ponds where the ice is never thin. He carries on from his earlier essay on *Emma* as pastoral idyll, he gives us Emerson on the English authentic virtues, and Conrad's Marlow on the authentic cruelty of Kurtz. We have all been here before, and a good deal of the time Trilling himself has been our guide. What the opening lectures beautifully set us up for is something much more interesting and difficult: the fate of "sincerity" from the time when Jane Austen could tell us who is the more "sincere" Dashwood sister down to the time in this century when "it all depends on your point of view." The most serious writers of the nineteenth century wrestled with the problem as if their lives depended on it. If the Machiavel survives in a figure like Morris Townsend in *Washington Square,* the hard questions about sincerity do not concern him but Dr. Sloper. We sit and stare at the narrations of Esther Summerson and Nelly Dean, and their

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very innocence and lack of self-consciousness leads us to wonder at their "sincerity." Perhaps most interesting is Thackeray and Becky Sharp. Trilling puts Becky at the end of a list of duplicitous characters, wolves in sheep's clothing, like Tartuffe and Blifil. But Becky, plotter and schemer though she is, at the crisis of her life claims she is guiltless of Rawdon's charge that she has been unfaithful with Lord Steyne, and Thackeray knows he does not know what to answer. "What *had* happened," he asks, "Was she guilty or not?" The questions are not coy; Becky is living on Lord Steyne's money, or, more properly, living well on nothing a year; the morality that can label her "whore" (and therefore duplicitous and insincere) cannot easily operate when transactions are a matter of credit rather than cash. There is sufficiently little difference between Becky's relations with Rawdon and with Steyne that Thackeray cannot say, and knows he cannot say, with whom she is "wife," with whom she is "mistress," to whom she is false or true.

The pity is that the questions I have just raised are right up Trilling's alley, precisely the sort of historical, moral, and literary problem he enjoys most. But instead of asking these questions Trilling sets up the deeply sincere but fundamentally inauthentic command of George Eliot to do one's duty and plays it against the really authentic command of Oscar Wilde to be as artifical as possible, and he does this, presumably, because he knows how to do so, has done so before. But the argument is familiar, to say nothing of doing injustice to George Eliot. This lapse into the familiar, furthermore, continues right through the lectures on the twentieth century: Marinetti's attacks on Ruskin—which, by the way, may be characteristic of early modern attitudes, but are not in themselves worth serious consideration—and a long discussion of Freud that is only slightly different from earlier ones in *The Liberal Imagination* and *Beyond Culture,* ending with predictable, if salutary, slaps at Marcuse and Laing.

At the very end, though, Trilling speaks out with full resonance, and we can perhaps use his closing sentences as a means of locating what is best and most limited in Trilling's liberal faith. He is responding to Laing's invitation to all of us to go mad, and Trilling calls this mere cant:

> And when we have given due weight to the likelihood that those who respond positively to the doctrine don't have it in mind to go mad, let alone insane—it is characteristic of the intellectual life of our culture that it fosters a form of assent which does not involve actual credence—we must yet take it to be significant of our circumstance that many among us find it gratifying to entertain the thought that alienation is to be overcome only by the completeness of alienation, and that alienation completed is not

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> a deprivation or deficiency but a potency. Perhaps exactly because the thought is assented to so facilely, so without what used to be called seriousness, it might seem that no expression of disaffection from social existence was ever so desperate as this eagerness to say that authenticity of personal being is achieved through an ultimate isolateness and through the power that this is presumed to bring. The falsities of an alienated social reality are rejected in favour of an upward psychopathic mobility to the point of divinity, each one of us a Christ—but with none of the inconveniences of undertaking to intercede, of being a sacrifice, of reasoning with rabbis, of making sermons, of having disciples, of going to weddings, and to funerals, of beginning something and at a certain point remarking that it is finished.

There is much that can be said of this passage, but the most obvious is its conviction, its sincerity and authenticity; the voice that intercedes, that reasons with rabbis, that here comes to an end, knows that for whatever else the mantle of reasonable discourse is to be discarded, it will not be for the chicness of a sentimental madness. And I for one find the patriarchal quality of that list at the end quite moving.

But the passage also reveals the way Trilling's prose is his own worst enemy. In the first sentence it gains nothing to redefine "don't have it in mind to go mad" as "assent which does not involve actual credence," because all it yields is the repetition of "the intellectual life of our culture" as "our circumstance," and to a repetition of Laing's doctrine at the close of the sentence. Having thus wrapped himself in his own thick phrasing, Trilling can only go on saying where he quite obviously already is, and the second sentence, full sixty words, adds absolutely nothing, leading neatly, in the final sentence, to still another repetition of Laing. The man, it must be admitted, just loves the sound of his own orotundity. Nor is my example unfair; the heaviness, the repetitiveness, is everywhere in Trilling's prose, and has been there from the beginning. When one says Trilling's writing can be flexible, one does not mean that it is not ponderous.

What the prose shows in every gesture, of course, it reveals about the mind. Trilling treats himself as an institution, and so he can never speak with anything less than full assurance. It never occurs to him that we may not want to know what is on his mind, or that we might entertain an idea of western culture different from his, or that we might approach it in different ways. Trilling does not think the history of the last five centuries is fully recoverable, but he unfailingly does think he can recover enough to make it relevant for any question that happens to be pressing; all you do is make patterns, continuities, trends, emphases. That way you seldom have

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to go one-on-one with an author, or to wish you knew more, or, occasionally, less. He never gives the impression of having read anything for the first time, of being surprised, confused, delighted, enraged, or captivated by anything he has read. That the past can rebuke the present is clear enough to him, though he never takes this idea seriously enough to think that perhaps now is not the best time to say something.

The impulse is to be masterful, to make sermons, to have disciples, and anyone who has ever taught or written knows it well. But since it is an impulse that easily can blind us to what we have not said, it is one which anyone of conscience and intelligence must guard against. The easiest and best way to keep the guard up is to quote, to quote a lot, to quote at length, because, unless one does this in the spirit of a copyist, one is forced to face the fact that the subject is another mind, one is forced to try to make one's prose responsive to the words of another, even if the response is scorn or laughter. Trilling quotes, but almost always in a summary way, so that what he is quoting can easily be folded into Trilling's argument and Trilling's demeanor need never alter. The point is not that Trilling is René Wellek or A. O. Lovejoy or George Steiner or someone else whose impulse to mastery leads to mongering the humorless, the absolute, or the fashionable. The point is, rather, that for all his serious and generous intelligence, he shares with these and similar writers the quality of seeming much better in the reading than in the memory. The way he seeks to gain himself, to be the master, is a way that tends to mean that he loses us because he never fully lets his subject live separately from him.

One suspects that for the average reader Trilling will be most admired for his utility in speaking to and perhaps even settling issues where literature is only part of the subject: "Reality in America," the essays on Freud, "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," "The Two Environments," etc. The advantage Trilling enjoys is that he is a thinker, he is generous, but he is no theoretician, and as a result these essays have and probably will continue to find their way into anthologies; they are useful, if one admits their subjects to be anything like as interesting or crucial as Trilling takes them to be. But for me these essays reread very badly, and for two reasons: the subjects themselves tend to date, and the whole idea of being plumply judicious about subjects of concern is one which has seen better days. There is no better way to see this than to look at the references to individual authors and works in the essays where the subject is a general one. The Dostoyevsky, the Proust, and most devastating, for me at least, the D. H. Lawrence that Trilling speaks of when he is not thinking directly and carefully about those writers are all caricatures, and worse, caricatures that appeal to the most fully received clichés

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about them. If the occasion to respond to the Leavis-Snow affair or new fashions in psychoanalysis is going to lead someone as learned and thoughtful as Trilling into these caricatures, then the occasions themselves perhaps had better be avoided.

Trilling is better than this, I think, when forced to address himself to a particular writer or work. This focus is no guarantee of success, but then it never is, and when quotation is what is called for and Trilling won't quote, the results can be damaging, as in his failure to note how flaccid Wordsworth is in the first half of the *Intimations Ode,* or to see how very good is Vernon Parrington's description of Hawthorne, even though his estimate of Hawthorne is much lower than Trilling thinks it should be. But even here Trilling is really interesting; if he cannot settle subjects, be truly decisive with individual works, he can almost always be counted on to ask good questions, to open something up: the essays on *Emma* and *Mansfield Park,* the appreciation of Keats's letters, the piece on *The Bostonians,* the sections on Diderot and Hegel in the present volume—give Trilling a subject where his penchant for generalizing is called for, and he is a careful and fine critic. One wonders why he has never done more than allude to the late Augustan writers—Fielding, Johnson, Gibbon, Burke—for surely here, if anywhere, is his real métier, the sober, the wise, the ironic, the heroically reasonable and learned. Trilling needs centrality of concern to be himself central; he cannot respond well to quirkiness and eccentricity, to slippery surface texture, to unargued assertion, to prejudice or mere opinion. He might feel he can twit Leavis about Leavis' apparently insistent moral tone, but he could never have written with Leavis' delicacy about Jonson, Carew, and Pope.

If Trilling's moment of highest fame and respect has passed, it is not likely to return, because he just does not write well enough, care enough for words, to outlive the world he received and in which he flourished. If we are to maintain our link with the European past we will have to do so more fugitively and eagerly than Trilling has done, and with a more urgent sense that we are liable to lose it if we fail to speak in our own voice, our ignorant voice, our American voice. Trilling wanted to be Matthew Arnold, and there was a time when that was taken as a wonderful thing to try to be. Trilling filled the role well. One might complain that he chose the wrong model, that Mill, or Ruskin, or George Eliot are more worth the effort. Perhaps the better complaint is that we had best be done with models, that we can keep the past alive not by imitating or emulating it but by reading its words aloud and by answering them in whatever authentic voice we have, wildly, loudly, or in hushed tones.

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GUY DAVENPORT

Prehistoric Eyes

When the Dogon of Upper Volta and Mali, some of the most primitive people to survive into our age, build a new sanctuary, they decorate the façade with a tall painted oblong to the right of the door, and with one to the left. The one on the right is filled in top to bottom with two zigzag lines superimposed, making a kind of totem-pole of lozenges, with a dot added to the center of each lozenge. The oblong to the left is divided into rectangles, each corresponding to the lozenges in the other oblong, and each with a dot in its center. Nothing could be simpler: we doodle such designs on our scratchpads at committee and board meetings, and we are aware that pottery the world over bears such repetitious designs. So does embroidery, wallpaper, furniture, jewelry. Encountering such designs, we have the aestheticians to tell us that they are rhythmic ways of filling space and of pleasing the eye. Archeologists will tell you that they are memories of the days when the first clay pots were imitations of woven baskets. The theories run on: these linear patterns spring from a love of symmetry, from a sense of infinity, from generosity of spirit, from a passion for intricate decoration.

But the Dogon are with us, lively and thriving, and if asked will explain their intent in painting a column of dotted lozenges to the right of a sanctuary door and a column of dotted rectangles to the left.

The column to the right represents the descent of a heavenly ark from deep in space to the African earth. On board were the 266 things which constitute all of life. The lozenges are actually the same as the rectangles on the left of the door, but tilted, to indicate that the ark in its fall spun like a leaf. Space is four-cornered (witness the solstices and equinoxes); hence lozenges. The dots are stones for the primal field. The lefthand column also represents the ark and the stages of its descent. Its rectangles are the lozenges oriented properly, as space when the ark had landed settled down to a constant up, a constant down, and the cardinal directions were then established.

The Dogon's explanation of this innocent-looking pattern goes on; you can consult 544 pages of it in the first fascicule of Vol. 1 of a projected sixteen volumes (Griaule and Dieterlen, *Le Renard pâle,* Institut d'Ethnologie, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, 1965). Similar explanations the world over of such designs are equally startling, equally discouraging to our attempts to read symbols.

And if the symbols are 30,000 years old? We are then faced with the letter in *Finnegans Wake* scratched up from a midden—Joyce's symbol for the deep, forgotten past, a past recorded sensitively and beau-

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tifully on cave walls, on bone, in sculpture, on flint tools, rings of megaliths, and mounds of earth depicting running horses, ithyphallic giants, and serpents. We have a vocabulary of responses to these signs, possibly all wrong, and probably projections of our way of seeing the world. We live in a decorated world, a frivolously decorated world, and thus see the Dogon graph of the primal ark's descent as a primitive pattern, something daubed by simple black souls.

In the deep background of Alexander Marshack's brilliant speculative study of prehistoric symbolism[1] are our gratuitous assumptions about the creature we call Cave Man. It was William Randolph Hearst, I believe, who gave us the shaggy, cow-browed, club-wielding lout dragging his wife behind him. We have received the curious notion that perhaps he grunted rather than spoke, and hunkered around a stick fire looking dazed and immensely stupid.

Yet in 18,000 B.C. he stitched his clothes together with an eyed needle, and when he fished he took along a fishhook and braided twine. He painted magnificent pictures of animals and gods, he sculpted with naturalistic skill. He had summer camps and winter camps.

He has even left us a picture of himself at Marsoulas, a face engraved in rock. It looks like nothing so much as a caricature by the French cartoonist Siné. The head is lightbulb-shaped. The eyes are shaky spirals crossed by an eyelid line. The nose is sharp and French, a triangle with a sagging hypotenuse. Two more lines: septum and mouth, at right angles, *et voilà!* There is a hairdo, probably plaits. Is it a woman? If not, our Cave Man shaved.

This George Price janitress (or god, or demon) is something we literally cannot see. We do not know if it is ugly or handsome, caricature or pious icon, male or female. Our eyes helplessly see it as witty and playful. It is Alley Oop by Alley Oop. And from it we can deduce an artist, a chisel, a mallet, and an audience that liked to look at pictures.

But Mr. Marshack starts his book with the fact that this creature watched the moon, noting its regularity of waxing and waning by notching bones, as if to be able to ascertain by double-checking that indeed every 29.5 days it repeats its dramatic metamorphosis from dark to sickle to circle to sickle to dark again.

This is Mr. Marshack's beginning. He was trying to make mathematical sense of the thousands of prehistoric objects on which prehistoric men kept track of something, like a western sheriff notching the handle of his gun for every horse thief brought down, or Robinson Crusoe with his calendrical stick. Some scholars said these incised lines were decoration; some have tried to see the birth of mathematics in them.

[1] THE ROOTS OF CIVILIZATION: THE COGNITIVE BEGINNINGS OF MAN'S FIRST ART, SYMBOL AND NOTATION, by *Alexander Marshack*. McGraw-Hill. $17.50.

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All, says Buckminster Fuller, is angle and incidence. Of primitive man's grasp of angles we know nothing. He would know that going downhill is easy, uphill hard, and would have perceived the use of the simplest machine, the inclined plane, down which things roll of their own accord. Some *vorarchimedisch* Archimedes will have stepped on the up end of a log leaning across a log and seen the principle of the fulcrum.

But it is incidence that Mr. Marshack tracks on the carved bones and calibrated rocks of the Upper Paleolithic. He offers dramatic and detailed arguments for reading the phases of the moon in series of notches which have been hitherto understood as decorations. Practically all the reviews of this part of his book have been scholarly cautious, many of them unconvinced. With reputations at stake, it is understandable that fellow prehistorians are not going to endorse Mr. Marshack straight off. Science is a matter of redoing experiments. In a sense it does not matter whether these markings are moon calendars or not. Mr. Marshack's point is that they are accounts in primeval numbers of something (animals killed in the hunt perhaps, or years in office of a phylarch, or days between menstrual periods).

When language emerges, the verb *to draw* is the same as *to write*. We can see, and to some extent read, the drawings of primitive man. Mr. Marshack's triumph in this book is that he goes a long way in showing us that the writing of the old stone age is indeed writing, and that there are plausible ways of reading it. From the notches which tend to come in groups of thirty and thus look suspiciously like lunar counts, he turns to engraved artifacts which have been around for years in museum cases and proceeds with a brilliantly useful idea—that of incidence, or as he says, "time-factoring"—to find coherences in symbols which had been interpreted before as totemistic, magic, or sexual.

A mackerel engraved on a bone, its mouth closed, becomes after Mr. Marshack's reinvestigation with microscope a salmon with its mouth open. Moreover, he identifies the pip that appears in the salmon's mouth at the spawning season. And why is the salmon pictured with a seal? Because, Mr. Marshack explains, seals at this time (as we know from fossils) followed the salmon far up inland rivers. And a squiggle of tiny lines in the composition with the salmon and seal turns out under the microscope to be a flower. The images become a story: spring, spawning, the earth coming to life again. Mr. Marshack is the first student of prehistory to detect floral imagery in these archaic pictures. Indeed, one needs a microscope to see the miniature blossoms and buds. Many "feathers," "spears," and "phalluses" of previous readings may well be primitive grains, or even trees.

Trees. The acacia tree to the Dogon is an animal, not a vegetable, or, as they say, "a person." It is surprising that ethnologists have not

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applied their knowledge of primitive thought to the reading of prehistory. It is among primitive metaphysics that the symbolic grammar of paleolithic signs will have survived, if it has survived. (Anthropologists like Leo Frobenius and Hertha von Dechend assume that it has.) Why not take a Dogon cosmologist to these mysterious bones and ask him to read them? If the master Dogon metaphysician Ogotemmêli, the blind old wizard who explained the earth, fate, and the stars (star by star) to the French ethnologist Marcel Griaule, could have been enticed into an *aliplani* (as he called it) and taken to the caves of the Dordogne, God knows what he could have explained.

Coming so soon after M. André Leroi-Gourhan's study of paleolithic cave painting, *Treasures of Prehistoric Art* (1968), and Annette Laming's *Lascaux* (1959), Mr. Marshack's pioneering theories arrive as part of a renaissance of prehistoric inquiries. Prehistory (Glyn Daniel has written a charming account of it in an available Penguin, *The Idea of Prehistory*) began among the antiquarians of England and France who kept stumbling upon it as inexplicable data (John Aubrey explained to King Charles that Stonehenge was a Roman temple). Some of the stone-age caves in France were discovered in the eighteenth century, though the discoverers hadn't a clue what they had discovered: they scrawled their initials and the date across the paintings and walked away, much as the chucklehead Bjarni Hrolfsson sailed by the coast of Massachusetts in 1000 and did not think it interesting enough to land upon.

John Frere had begun by 1790 to collect flint weapons from a pit in Suffolk; in 1838 Boucher de Perthes had a collection of stone axes; and the great search sets out in 1838 when Brouillet found in a cave at Vienne an engraved bone: the first example of ice-age art (Darwin was at the same time grasping the principles of evolution in the Galapagos).

Prehistory became a science in the hands of Henri Breuil and Émile Cartailhac and their circle. Even before their theories became current knowledge, Breuil's disciple Leroi-Gourhan, whose training was anthropological rather than antiquarian, found a way of making sense of the cave paintings. Starting with a survey of some 600 caves, he began to see patterns in the grouping of the animals: if a horse here, then a cow there. Human figures are always at the entrance or deepest part of the caves. Breuil had established the vocabulary of the images; Leroi-Gourhan gives us a coherent theory of the grammar. Mr. Marshack offers us a theory of inflections, of morphology.

Context has been the great problem of understanding: how these images figured in man's life. Breuil, a priest, tended to see them as religious; André-Gourhan posited a sexual context of survival and creation. Marshack places them in time, in the seasons, and relates them to the hunt (man followed the herd animals; the Lapps still do), the sacrifice (the microscope discloses that images of animals

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have been "killed" several times over with lines in mortal places), the rutting and birth periods.

The microscope can determine that a small object, an incised bone with images and time-notations, was carried in men's hands for years and years. It can also reveal that worn images were "refreshed" with new engraving after years of handling. This is a new concept for prehistory: suddenly we have migrant men with objects in their hands which are not axes or knives, but chronometers with persistent symbols—a horse and salmon together was one of the most common. The hunter hunted with an image of the dying, pierced animal in his hand.[2]

The little goddesses, all fat behind and bosom, turn out to be annotated, and this makes the moon count wonderfully plausible, for she is our sole link between the wandering tribes and man the agriculturalist in his first cities. That she is a moon goddess is one of the very few sure guesses we can make about the religion of Ice Age man.

For years now two disciplines have been tunneling toward each other through deep time: the prehistorians, who see their subject melt into thin air before 10,000 B.C., and the archeologists, who see their subject arising around 6,000 B.C. A few faint and tenuous lines are beginning to cross those blind years. The images on rock in the Val Camonica in the Tyrol seem to be continuous from prehistory to Roman times: in the earliest horned men with strange paddles in their hands mate with reindeer cows, and in the later they own wagons and chariots and bronze swords. James Mellaart's discoveries

[2] François Bordes, Professor of Prehistory at the University of Bordeaux, announced in December that he has discovered an engraved bone near the Pech de l'Aze Cave, in the environs of Sarlat, a region of the Dordogne rich in prehistoric caves and artifacts, which he estimates to be 230,000 years old. This is 200,000 years older than any previously known graphic notation by a human hand. The bone is the thigh of an ox, and the marks are arcs, bands, and double chevrons (like a gull's wings in flight). Mr. Marshack flew to France to determine by microscopic analysis if indeed the bone is engraved rather than scratched or cracked. His conclusion, which he presented before the American Association of Archeologists at the end of the year, is that it is engraved, probably with a chipped flint instrument. Prof. Hallam Movius, the distinguished professor of archeology at Harvard and protégé of Henri Breuil, agrees that the bone is engraved deliberately (as distinct from idle whittling). He would, however, shave 100,000 years from the bone's antiquity, and Marshack himself believes the bone to be no more than 135,000 years old. I learned about the bone from the French press and remembering its flare for the sensational called both Profs. Movius and Marshack to see just what had been found. Prof. Marshack feels that the markings are neither art nor notation of the kind he elucidates in *The Roots of Civilization,* but is certain that they are signs. The dating of the bone is by geological stratum. Except for the surety that the bone is pre-Neanderthal, there is no information whatever to point to what kind of man might have engraved it. No marked object older than 35,000 years was known before its discovery.

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at Çatal Hüyük in Anatolian Turkey connect history and prehistory: the bulls of Lascaux and Altamira are still in the religious symbolism, and the big-bosomed goddess is there, flanked by leopards, recognizably the Mama of Sumeria and the Cybele of ancient Syria. Zuntz's *Persephone* (Oxford, 1972) traces the rise of this old goddess (who will become the field-goddess Demeter of the Greeks and the city-goddess Cybele-Astarte-Fortuna of the Roman Empire) in Malta, where her prehistoric underground shrines were kidney-shaped, dark, and devoted to the idea that birth and death are complementary events: Eleusis thousands of years before Eleusis.

"The repertoire of images found across the Upper Paleolithic of Europe," Mr. Marshack writes (p. 260),

> . . . suggests a storied, mythological, time-factored, seasonal, ceremonial and ritual use of animal, fish, bird, plant, and serpent images, and it apparently also includes at times what seem to have been selective and seasonal killing and sacrifice, either of the image, in rite, or of the real animal. The complexity and interrelation of these storied meanings cannot easily be explained by any generalizing theories propounding concepts of hunting magic, fertility ritual, or sexual symbolism. Instead, the art and symbol suggest a broad range of cognitions, cultural and practical, and a profound understanding of processes in nature and of the varieties of living creatures.

And of the men who left us this art Mr. Marshack has wanted to determine their "evolved human cognition." And there the mystery is concealed: for we are on the moon studying geology and cosmology while acting, as nations and as individuals, with a savagery and brutality that may not even have been known (certainly not possible) to primitive man. Man, it would seem, does not evolve; he accumulates. His fund of advantages over nature and over the savage within is rich indeed, but nothing of the old Adam has been lost; our savagery has perhaps increased in meanness and fury; it stands out ever more terribly against a modern background.

Art, for instance, has not evolved. It has always been itself, and modern artists have notoriously learned more from the archaic discovered in our time than from the immediate centuries. Herakleitos was more precious to Wittgenstein than Plato. One can move from Pythagoras to Buckminster Fuller without needing the intervening geometricians as a connection.

And cognition? I would swap eyes, were it possible, with an Aurignacian hunter; I suspect his of being sharper, better in every sense. History is not linear; it is the rings of growth in a tree; and it is tragic. Mr. Marshack's study of mind twenty millennia back is a touching of ghosts in the dark, the ghosts of people from whom we are descended, whose genes we carry in our bodies. Our most diligent sciences look

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inward into the cell and atom, to stave off death. The historical sciences do not so obviously stave off death, but it seems to me that in searching for man in his past and finding him not brutal and inarticulate but a creature of accomplished sensitivity and order, sane and perhaps more alive than we, is a shield against the forces among us that stave off life.

The Dogon, most primitive of men, can point to the star (western man found it only recently, with a telescope, and catalogued it with a number, and published the fact in the back pages of a newspaper, which was then used to wrap garbage) that contains the plan for the spiral inside the crabgrass seed, the source of life. I imagine the reindeer hunters of the Dordogne could, too. The real meaning, it seems to me, of such a book as this, is not what we have grown from as men living together, but what we have lost.

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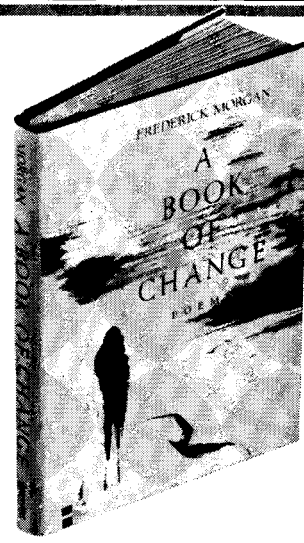

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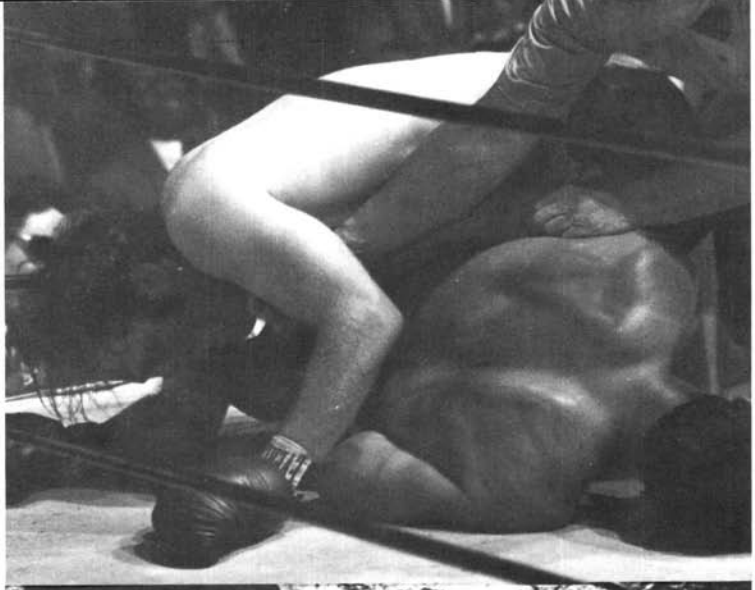

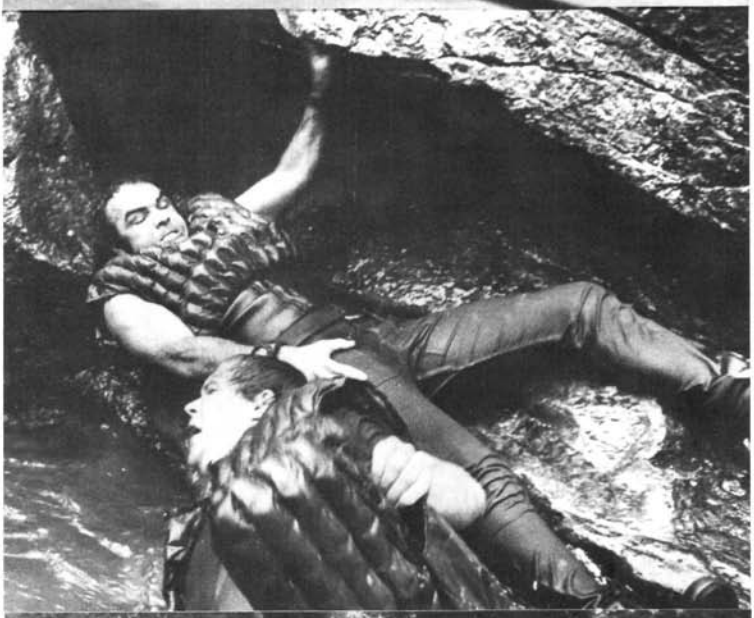

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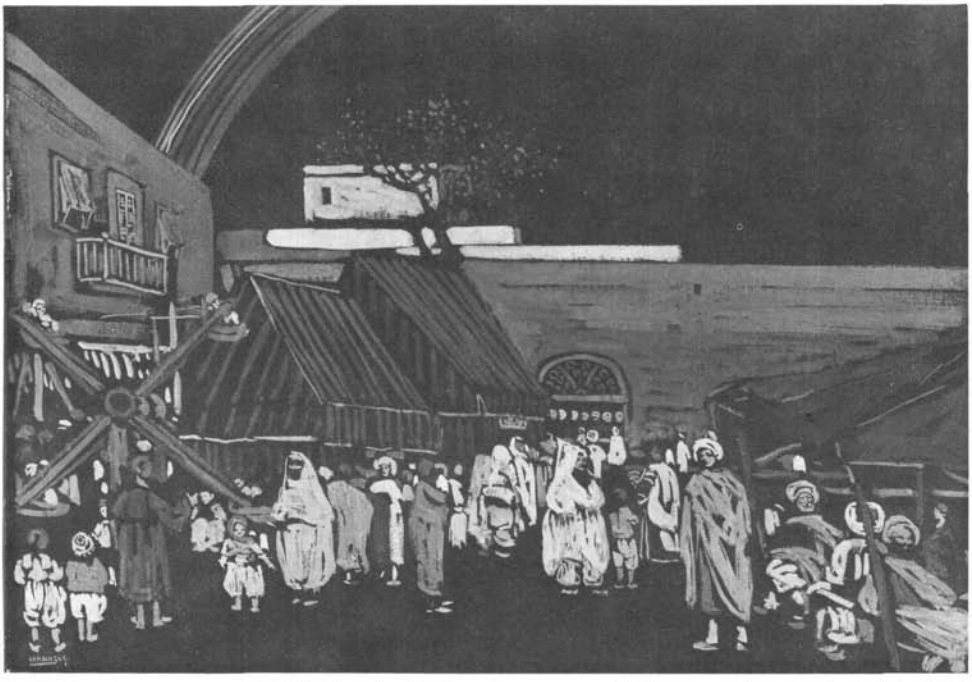

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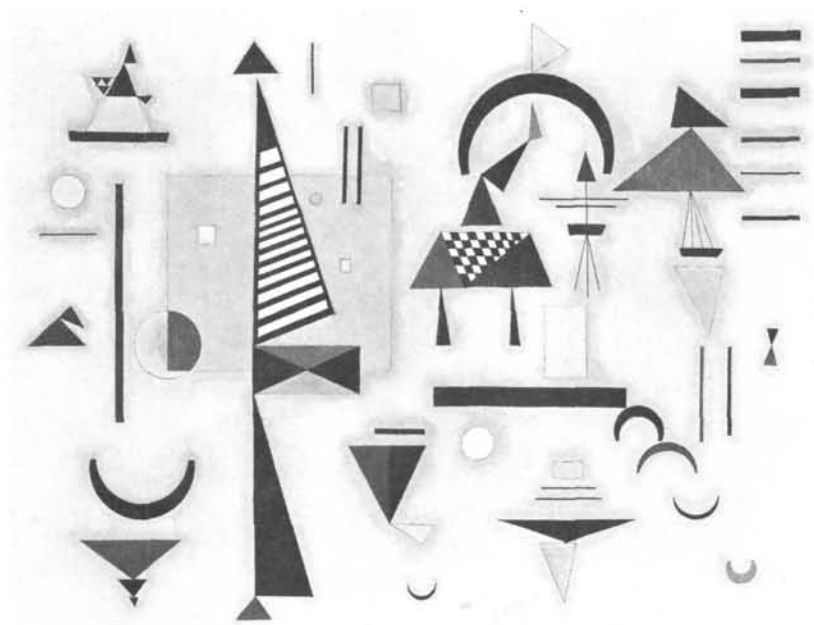

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